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A PARTICULAR  
E N Q U I R Y  
INTO THE  
D O C T R I N E  
OF AN  
ETERNAL FILIATION:  
BEING  
A S E Q U E L  
TO THE  
APPEAL TO THE NEW TESTAMENT, IN PROOF  
OF THE DIVINITY OF THE SON OF GOD.

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A PARTICULAR

ENQUIRY

INTO THE

DOCTRINE

OF THE

ETERNAL FIRES

BEING

A TREATISE

OF THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE  
PUNISHMENT OF THE DAMNED



BY CHARLES H. SPENCER

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

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A PARTICULAR

E N Q U I R Y

INTO THE

DOCTRINE

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ETERNAL FILIATION.

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**I**T is not without much anxiety of thought and diffidence that I presume to make a particular enquiry into the doctrine relative to the Filiation of the Son of God. Deeply awful is the subject, and important, and without the most guarded attention may be misrepresented, and most certainly will, if, forsaking the light which the Scriptures afford us, we presume to decide upon it by the reasoning of conjecture or imagination, or by the authority of long established opinions. These I wish totally to discard, and humbly trust that I shall offer nothing to the

B

reader

reader upon the subject, which does not flow from those sacred fountains of truth, that are alone infallible authority for the doctrines of Christianity.

The object which I have in view by the enquiry is certainly of very great consequence, and, if successfully accomplished, cannot but be attended with very beneficial effects. For such assuredly may be called the removal of those difficulties, which obstruct many well meaning persons from the full acknowledgement of our Lord's divinity. Such also must be accounted, if it can be accomplished, the total subversion of that system by which Arianism hitherto hath been supported. The chief pillar on which the Arians rest themselves, is the doctrine of the Eternal Filiation of the Son of God. This doctrine, if shewn to be unfounded, leaves them without any apology for their error, and, as Arians, they will no longer be able to advance and support those opinions, with which they have perplexed themselves, and the minds of those who have attended to them.

As then such are the beneficial effects which I hope and trust will flow from the present enquiry, let me bespeak the reader's candour to attend me. Let me flatter myself, that I shall not be condemned even if I should prove unsuccessful, and that whereinfoever I shall fail will be imputed to the weakness of a good intention,  
rather

rather than to determined error, or the wilfulness of a perverse mind.

It is pretty generally acknowledged, both by antient and modern writers, that the Gnostic heresy was the root from whence originated the Arian; although, perhaps, they have not quite satisfactorily exemplified in what manner.

The Gnostic heresy, as is well known, consisted of a great variety of wild and phantastic conceits; wherein it was affirmed, that our Lord was an inferior being, sent from the Pleroma to inhabit the form of a human substance. By degrees these errors became accumulated; and in the second century Valentinus had reduced the whole into a sort of system, distinguishing and characterising their various imaginary *Æons*, together with their respective generations; which generations Ptolemy had the effrontery to endeavour to justify by an appeal to the Gospel of St. John, from whom they affected to have derived their terms *Αληθεια*, *Χαρις*, *Μονογενης*, &c. This may be seen more at large in Irenæus, lib. i. and seems plainly to refute the opinion of some ingenious men, who have imagined that St. John borrowed these terms from the Gnostics; whereas Irenæus puts it beyond a doubt that the Gnostics professed to have received the knowledge of these terms from St. John, and to use them in the same sense as he did. This, however, I only mention

by the way. That which I chiefly intend to suggest to the reader at present is, that in this generation of the phantastic Æons of the Gnostics was laid the first foundation of that doctrine, which teaches that a Son was eternally generated in the Divine nature.

The position appears to me to be most assuredly certain, that no such doctrine is the doctrine of Scripture : and although this, as being a negative, I do not pretend to prove ; yet I think such arguments may be produced to justify the position, as can be deemed very little short of proof.

The very learned and respectable Bishop Pearson, who I suppose had examined this matter with as much accuracy as any man, in proof that God *always had* a Son appeals to the prophecy of Agur. The learned Prelate's words are, " The communication of the Divine Essence  
" by the Father is the generation of the Son ;  
" and Christ, who was eternally God, not from  
" himself, but from the Father, is the Eternal  
" Son of God. That God always had a Son,  
" appeareth by Agur's question in the Proverbs  
" of Solomon ; *Who hath established all the ends  
" of the earth ? What is his name ? and what  
" is his Son's name ?* If thou canst tell." But how this should be a proof that God always had a Son generated in his own Divine nature, is, I own, beyond my conception. As Agur's words  
are



are expressly distinguished to be a prophecy, they may be a prediction of a Son of God who should be manifested to the world; but farther than this, by any mode of reasoning that I am acquainted with, they do not seem to extend. Indeed, if the doctrine of the Eternal Generation is presupposed and adopted, the question may be appealed to as corroborating and confirming the supposition. But the point is, Does the question of Agur positively and in plain terms declare the doctrine of the Eternal Generation? This, I presume, I may assuredly say it does not. It is merely a passage which may be thought to coincide with the doctrine when it is presupposed; but without the presupposition cannot be conceived to teach the doctrine, or any thing appertaining to it. Let us for a moment divest ourselves of all recollection of the doctrine of the Eternal Generation; let us suppose that no such doctrine had ever been known in the world; and then let us fairly and honestly say, whether the words of Agur would convey to us any imagination of any such doctrine. Assuredly he that had not heard of the doctrine, nor prepossessed his mind with an idea of it, never could be induced from these words to infer its truth; for although they may seem to imply that God has a Son, and even that they do not imply, if the words are considered as prophetical; yet they do not teach that the Son was eternally generated

in the Divine nature ; to which the words do not appear to have any kind of relation. In like manner with regard to all other passages of Scripture which are urged in proof of the doctrine. The doctrine is first presupposed, and then the Scripture, from some imagined coincidence with it, is urged in proof of it.

There is a passage in the second Psalm, which is often urged in proof of the received doctrine : but drop the preconceived idea of an Eternal Generation, and then what do the words prove ? “ I will declare,” saith David in the spirit of prophecy, “ the decree. The Lord hath said “ unto me, Thou art my Son ; this day have I “ begotten thee.” Now a decree is something that is determined to take place, and must by necessity be prior to that which is decreed ; but that which is decreed is, “ Thou art my Son ; “ this day have I begotten thee :” therefore the Filiation was posterior to the decree. - It is also to be observed, that the word היום σημερον is a word of time, and, if interpreted as we are taught to interpret it in the Epistle to the Hebrews, iv. 7. cannot possibly be applicable to an Eternal Generation. “ Again, he limiteth a *certain day*, “ saying in David, *to-day*, σημερον, after so long “ a time ;” by which the signification of the word is so fixed, that it cannot be applied to Eternity. What is here said appears to be very strongly confirmed by Psalm lxxxix. 27. “ I  
“ *will*

“ *will make him my first-born*, higher than the  
 “ kings of the earth ;” therefore it was to be a  
 future event. Again, Hebrews i. 5. “ To  
 “ which of the Angels said he at any time, Thou  
 “ art my Son ; this day have I begotten thee.”  
 And again, “ I *will* be to him a *Father*, and he  
 “ *shall* be to me a *Son*.” And again, “ When  
 “ he bringeth his first-begotten into the world,  
 “ he saith, Let all the Angels of God worship  
 “ him.” If he was the first, and eternally be-  
 gotten in the Divine nature, this command to  
 the Angels to worship him *as the Son*, whom  
 they always had worshipped *as the Son*, must  
 have been superfluous.

In treating this subject it has been the gene-  
 rally prevailing error, that men have prepos-  
 sessed their minds with an idea of the truth of the  
 doctrine, and then have applied to the Scripture  
 for proof of it, when at the same time their  
 minds have determined that it is true without  
 that proof: the absurdity of which mode of  
 proceeding can be exemplified by nothing more  
 strongly than by what follows.

Our Lord says, John iii. 13. “ And no one  
 “ hath ascended into Heaven but he that came  
 “ down from Heaven, even the Son of Man,  
 “ who is in Heaven.” And again, John vi. 63.  
 “ What if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend-  
 “ ing where he was before.” Now if the mind  
 is preposessed with an idea of the Eternal Gene-



ration of the *Son of Man*, how aptly will these passages coincide with the idea, and how triumphantly might they be urged in proof of its truth ; although, taken apart from the mind's prepossession, they are no proof at all of it. Consider whether it is not exactly the same with regard to the doctrine of an Eternal Generation in the Divine nature, which the mind first determines to be true without proof, and then applies the Scripture to prove it. But quit the preconceived idea of an Eternal Generation, and then all that proof, which is imagined to be in the passages urged, will immediately vanish. What proof do these words afford of the doctrine ? “ God *sent forth his Son*; God so loved the “ World, that he gave his only-begotten Son.” I apprehend they afford none, unless you suppose that God could not have a Son, except he was eternally generated in the Divine nature ; which I conceive no man will say. The words indeed prove that there is a Son of God ; but with regard to the manner how, or when, he became such, they give not the smallest indication.

There is indeed a passage in Scripture, Romans viii. 3. from whence it has been thought that a filiation, prior to the incarnation, may be *inferred*. “ For what the Law could not do, “ in that it was weak through the flesh, God “ *sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful*  
“ *flesh,*



“ *flesh*, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.” From hence it has been thought that it fairly may be inferred that he existed as a Son prior to his being sent in the likeness of sinful flesh. But here let it be considered that the passage is intelligible, and the expression applicable without the inference. For who was it that he sent? Evidently his Son, *εν ὁμοιωματι σαρκος ἁμαρτίας*, not meaning thereby that he was his Son before he was sent in that likeness; for the passage does not appear to have any retrospect whatever; but the whole intent of it appears to be, to declare that he who was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, was the Son of God, without any reference at all to when, or where, he became such. And as it is quite beyond the intention of the passage to refer to any thing of the kind, so in the same proportion the inference becomes an unlawful one, as the premises will not support it. But even supposing that the inference was justifiable, still it does not prove the doctrine of an Eternal Generation; which might or might not be true, notwithstanding the inference.

However, if the words of the Apostle are interpreted according to what appears to be their true import, there will not be the smallest pretence for inferring from them the doctrine here specified. *Ὁ Θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν πέμψας ἐν ὁμοιωματι σαρκος ἁμαρτίας*, “ God sending his own Son, conceived and born in a manner similar to  
that

that in which sinful man is conceived and born the Son of Man ;” or in fewer words, “ God sending his own Son in the manner as sinful flesh is sent.” Now if you infer from hence the pre-existent filiation of the Son of God before his being sent, you must by necessity infer the pre-existence of sinful flesh before its being sent ; for otherwise the resemblance and similitude will not hold in that respect, wherein it is evident it ought to consist. Surely it is sufficient that he is a Son when he is sent, without requiring him to be a Son before he is sent. The pre-existence of the sons of men, before their filiation by conception and birth, would be strange doctrine, but perhaps not more strange and inconsistent with Scripture, than the pre-existent filiation of the Son of God prior to his Divine conception and birth, as related by St. Luke.

It has been thought, also, that an eternal filiation in the Divine nature may be inferred from Hebrews vii. 4. where Melchizedec, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, is said to be made like unto the Son of God. If the resemblance of Melchizedec to the Son of God consisted in his having neither beginning of days nor end of life, then the Son of God must have existed eternally as a Son. This is inferred too hastily. The resemblance is placed by the sacred writer in the Priesthood, *αφωμοιωμενος δε τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ Θεοῦ, μενει ιερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές*. Melchizedec,

dec, we are told at the beginning of the chapter, was *a Priest of the most High God*. He was King of Righteousness, which is the interpretation of his name Melchizedec, and King of Salem, that is, of Peace. “Without father and without mother,” because neither the names of his father nor of his mother are recorded. “Without descent,” for we know not of what family he was. “Having neither beginning of days, nor end of life,” inasmuch as the day of his birth or of his death are nowhere mentioned. “And remaineth, like the Son of God, a Priest for ever.” Here evidently the resemblance of Melchizedec to our Lord is stated to be in his Priesthood, and its continuance. The resemblance certainly cannot be conceived to be in his being *Απατωρ, Αμητωρ, Αγενεαλογητος*, nor, as I humbly conceive, will the resemblance hold in *μητε αρχην ημερων, μητε ζωης τελος εχων*; but if it did, it would prove nothing, as no inference could therefore be derived from it that our Lord was *a Son eternally generated in the Divine nature*, since without being such he might be without beginning of days or end of life, and, as being the *λογος* united with our nature, he certainly was.

There is a great variety of other passages urged in proof, as it is imagined, of the doctrine under consideration; but as they all, I believe, may be answered in pretty nearly the same manner,

ner, I shall not trouble the reader with them: only let the idea be discarded with which the mind is prepossessed, and the proof, which is imagined to be in the passage that is advanced, will appear to be altogether defective. I shall therefore now proceed to enquire whether the Scriptures do not positively teach and inculcate a doctrine different from, and inconsistent with, the doctrine of an Eternal Generation in the Divine nature; and this, as it appears to me, they most assuredly do.

Different and inconsistent with it appears to be the doctrine of St. Matthew's Gospel. Joseph, as we are therein told, is warned by an Angel concerning the Blessed Virgin, in these words, *το γαρ εν αυτη γεννηθεν, εκ Πνευματος εσω αγιου. Τεξεται δε υιον*, and his name was to be called Jesus, because he should save his people from their sins. The Evangelist then adds, that all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, "Behold a Virgin *εν γαστρι εξει και τεξεται υιον, και καλεσσει το ονομα αυτου—Μεθ' ημων ο Θεος.*" Now it is very extraordinary that the Evangelist, in recording the circumstances which related to the birth of this Divine person, should be entirely silent concerning his being the eternally generated Son in the Divine nature, if such had been the fact. He is very exact in recording that the Virgin should conceive and bring forth  
*a Son;*



a Son ; he is exact in recording that his name should be called Jesus ; and he is particular in applying and explaining the Prophecy relative to his Divine nature ; but not a word is said, or the smallest hint given, of his being the eternally generated Son of God. He tells us plainly and positively that he was Μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ Θεός. But surely, if he had been acquainted with any such doctrine, he would have said ὁ υἱὸς Θεοῦ. But he is altogether silent with regard to any such matter ; and therefore since neither expressly, nor by implication, can his words be referred to any such thing, we shall surely be unjustifiable in going beyond him, and in teaching that he is the eternally generated Son of God, when the Evangelist only and expressly teaches that he is ὁ Θεός.

I might urge the very first words of St. Matthew's Gospel, as militating most strongly against the doctrine of an Eternal Generation. Βιβλος γενεσεως Ιησου Χριστου, the book of the generation of Jesus Christ : for here either the Evangelist hath not given us the true γενεσις of Jesus Christ, or the doctrine of an Eternal Generation is merely of human invention. It is true, Dr. Hammond, who never can be mentioned but with respect, on account of his abilities and stedfast attachment to the Church of England and the Christian faith, puts an interpretation upon the word γενεσεως, which will not at all accord with our translation ;

translation ; and because the word does not necessarily signify birth or generation, but may, and often does, signify *events, facts, &c.* He therefore would give it in this place the latter signification. But this signification, I fear, he wished to give it, merely that it might not stand in the way of the received doctrine of the Eternal Generation. For as the words Βίβλος γενεσews are immediately connected with the genealogical account of the filiation which follows ; therefore it seems that they must be primarily, if not altogether, referred and limited to that only. But I pass on to the Gospel of St. Luke.

St. Luke, in recording what relates to the conception and birth of our Lord, tells us, that an Angel addressing the Virgin Mary, saith thus to her : “ Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found  
 “ favour with God: And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a  
 “ Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He  
 “ shall be great, and *shall be called the Son of  
 “ the Highest.*”

And again he saith to her, “ The Holy Ghost  
 “ shall come upon thee, and the power of the  
 “ Highest shall overshadow thee, διο και το γεν-  
 “ νωμενον ἁγίου κληθησεται υἱος Θεου, *Therefore also  
 “ that holy thing which shall be born of thee  
 “ shall be called the Son of God.*” Διο propter  
 quod, on which account, for which reason, he  
*shall be called the Son of God.* By what au-  
 thority,

thority, then, are we to say that he is the Son of God on account of any prior generation? Observe it is here stated, that, by the Holy Ghost and the power of the Highest overshadowing her, a conception and birth was to take place, and a son was to be born, and this son so born, *το γεννημενον ἅγιον*, *shall be called κληθησεται υἱος Θεου*; so that it is evident from hence that his filiation as the Son of God would commence from this birth. Prior to that event he might be, and is stiled *το ἅγιον*, but not *υἱος Θεου*; and therefore it seems to me to be in direct contradiction to the Evangelist to adopt a notion of a Divine Filiation prior to that event. The words of the Evangelist are so exceedingly positive and plain, that one would wonder how the received opinion concerning the filiation ever could have been admitted: for if the *το ἅγιον* had been eternally generated in the Divine nature, he had by that generation, and by necessity, been the *Son of God*; and therefore, as it should seem, with reverence be it spoken, there could be no occasion for a second filiation, in order to make him become what he was already. But here the filiation is spoken of as an event that had not as yet taken place, as an event that was to be accomplished at a future period, *κληθησεται υἱος Θεου*, *he shall be called the Son of God*. Not a syllable is said, or the smallest intimation given, of any prior generation, which surely would have been given,

given, if it had been a fact, in order to guard us against conceiving that his filiation consisted only in his miraculous conception and birth ; a doctrine which the words of St. Luke do so plainly and forcibly point out to us. If the title of Son of God was to be given to him in consequence and on account of his wonderful conception and birth of the Blessed Virgin, then are we not to look for the origin of that title in any prior generation : but St. Luke's words are too plain to be mistaken, and therefore the consequence cannot be denied.

Different likewise, and inconsistent with the idea of an Eternal Generation, is the doctrine of St. John's Gospel. The λογος, he tells us, existed from all eternity with God, and was God, and he made all things, and without him was not any thing made that was made ; and this λογος σαρκὶ ἐγενετο, and we beheld *his glory*, that is, the glory of the λογος when he became flesh ; “ the glory as of the *only-begotten* of the Father.” Here then we have the το ἅγιον γεννωμενον of St. Luke. Here we have the Μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ Θεος of St. Matthew ; and his pre-existence decidedly determined to have been not as the υἱος, but as the λογος, for it was the λογος who σαρκὶ ἐγενετο, that was manifested to us in that incarnation in the glory of the Son of God. The Evangelist doth not mention the several particulars relative to the mode of that incarnation, be-  
cause



cause they had been sufficiently particularised by the two other Evangelists, and because his object was to supply what they had omitted, and to inform us who, and how, the *το ἅγιον* existed prior to the incarnation; that he existed from all eternity as the *Word*, that he existed with God, that he was God, that all things were made by him, and that without him nothing was made that was made: so that hereby the Evangelist expressly confines the filiation to the union of the Word with man's nature when he became flesh. Why does he not speak of the *υἱος* as existing prior to the incarnation? for if he was eternally generated in the Divine nature, he then certainly did exist with God prior to the incarnation, and then it was the *υἱος* who became flesh. But St. John expressly says that it was the *λογος* who existed with God, and who became flesh; and therefore the words of St. John are opposite, in the most direct terms, to the doctrine of a Son eternally generated in the Divine nature.

To this I see not what can be opposed, but a conceit which I have already mentioned, and which appears to me to be altogether groundless, namely, that St. John, writing against the Gnostics in order to their confutation, makes use of the terms which they had introduced, and therefore says *λογος*, and not *υἱος*. But the Gnostics themselves knew nothing of this; for

they appeal to St. John's Gospel as justifying all their wild errors. Οὕτως, say they, ὁ Ἰωάννης περὶ τῆς πρώτης καὶ μητρὸς τῶν ὅλων Αἰώνων Οὐδοαδὸς εἰρηκε. Πατέρα γὰρ εἰρηκε, καὶ Χάριν, καὶ Μονογενῆ, καὶ Ἀληθεῖαν, καὶ Λόγον, καὶ Ζωὴν, καὶ Ἀνδρῶπον, καὶ Ἐκκλησίαν. And Irenæus, who replies to this their mad perversion of St. John's Gospel, appears from his answer to have known nothing at all of this conceit; for if he had, the answer would have been short and decisive, that his Gospel was written expressly in opposition to them, and therefore could not be in favour of them; and that the terms Πατήρ, Χάρις, Μονογενῆς, &c. were used by him purely for the confutation of what they said concerning these subjects. But Irenæus, in his answer, is quite wide of any such thing. He urges them only with their misinterpretation and misapplication of St. John; and that, according even to their own statement and rules, what St. John says will not agree with the distribution of their Æons. According to them, he says, St. John will not have made any mention of our Lord Jesus Christ; for if he hath mentioned Πατέρα καὶ Χάριν, καὶ Μονογενῆ, &c. according to their hypothesis περὶ τῆς πρώτης Οὐδοαδὸς εἰρηκε, ἐν ἣ ἔδεπτο Ἰησοῦς ἔδεπτο Χριστὸς ὁ τε Ἰωάννης διδασκαλὸς. And again, that although St. John says, speaking concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, whom he knew to be the WORD of God, καὶ ὁ λόγος σαρκὶ ἐγένετο, yet that  
according

according to their hypothesis, *εχ' ὁ λογος σαφ' ἐγενετο* ; and says that their misapplication of St. John is like the contrivance of him who, selecting various lines of Homer, by an artful combination applies them to a subject of which Homer never thought, and then ascribes the whole to Homer. Now this, and much more which he hath said, he never would have urged against them, if he had known any thing of that short and decisive answer which might have been given, that St. John's Gospel was professedly written to confute their doctrines, and therefore could not possibly accord with them; and therefore I conceive the conjecture to be ill-founded, which supposes that St. John uses the term *λογος*, and not *υιος*, because he was contending against the Gnostics. (Irenæus, lib. i. c. i. in. & seq.)

St. John, I am persuaded, uses not the term *λογος* from any such cause as that which has been here noticed. He uses it because it was a fact and the truth that the *λογος* existed eternally with God, and was God, &c. because the Jews were well acquainted with the term; for it was the Eternal Word who was with the Patriarchs. It was he who was with the children of Israel in all their peregrinations, and brought them in, and established them in the land of their possession. There he protected and instructed them; there he continued, notwithstanding their vari-



ous provocations, speaking to them by his Prophets, until at length they would no longer hear him; and then prophecy ceased, and he seemed for awhile to be withdrawn from them. But he hid his face from them only for a little while, for his mercy was not to fail, and he was again to come *to his own*, and to remember them with an everlasting love, if they would receive him. He did, and, laying aside his Divine glory, by a mysterious and inexplicable condescension he submitted to be united in one person with man's nature, and to be born as human beings are born, and by an incomprehensible operation to become the Son of God and of man. Here, being a Son, he submitted himself *as a Son* to the will of his Father, laying aside his own will. Here, as the son of man, he submitted to be treated as a slave, to give his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: but notwithstanding this humiliation, this inanition of himself, he nevertheless continued to be, as St. John describes him, the *Word* who was eternally with God, and the Word that was God, but who had now assumed the character of *υἱός*. And it is remarkable that St. John, although at the beginning of his Gospel he uses only the term *λογος*, yet after that he has said, *Ὁ λογος σαρκὶ ἐγένετο*, he drops that term, and constantly uses the word *Υἱός*; and something of the same kind seems to occur



occur in the beginning of his first Epistle, where, having first spoken *περι τε λογος της ζωης*, he then afterwards in the same manner adopts the term *υιος*, "Our fellowship is with the Father," and with *τε υιος αυτου Ιησους Χριστος*, to inculcate into us, I presume, that it was the Eternal Word who became the Son of God.

And here I know not how to refrain from an appeal to the controverted text, concerning the three heavenly witnesses, which assuredly hath this mark of authenticity, that it perfectly accords with the doctrine of the holy Evangelist in his Gospel, and hath moreover this internal mark of its not having been foisted in by any over zealous Christian, that the words are, *ὁ Πατηρ, ὁ ΛΟΓΟΣ, και το ἅγιον Πνευμα*; for had it been an interpolation, the word would most probably have been *υιος*, conformable with the words prescribed in baptism: and as the doctrine of the Trinity is always specified to be that the Father, *the Son*, and the Holy Ghost, are one God; so the interpolator would have made St. John assert of these, *και οὗτοι οἱ τρεις εν ειναι*; for otherwise the interpolation would not have accomplished its object, in being a Scripture proof of the *received* doctrine of the Trinity. The interpolation is supposed to have been made by those who reject the text as spurious, considerably after the time of the Council of Nice, when the doctrine of the Eternal Generation generally prevailed; and it

was conceived that the Son, *as a Son*, was from all eternity God with the Father and the Holy Ghost. But what a wretched advocate for his church's doctrine must the interpolator have been, to insert such a text as this concerning the heavenly witnesses, in proof that *the Son* was God from all eternity with the Father; a text that says it was the *λογος*, and not the Son, and which makes the *λογος*, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, attesting, bearing record in Heaven, that Jesus is the Son of God. If then the passage really is an interpolation, it is one of the most extraordinary kind that ever was heard of: so far from being calculated to answer, that it is calculated only to defeat its own purposes. For on a supposition that the Son was eternally generated in the Divine nature, the insertion of this text, in order to prove that the Son, *as a Son*, was a person in the Divine Trinity, would be to prove the direct contrary; and that the Son, however eternally generated, was not one with the Father and the Holy Ghost. This the text certainly does prove, when it asserts that it is the Word who is a person in the Trinity, and one with the Father and the Holy Ghost; and that *these bear witness in Heaven to the filiation of Jesus*, and that he is the Son of God, which, as clearly as any thing can do, distinguishes the *Son* from the *Word*. I know not whether this matter has been noticed before, but it well deserves

serves consideration : for if this passage of St. John is genuine, as I am fully persuaded it is, it affords evidence of the strongest kind in opposition to the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation ; and in opposition to it also, I apprehend, is the doctrine of St. Paul. In no place however, I am confident, does he justify it.

Galatians iv. 4. Ὅτε δὲ ἦλθε τὸ πληρωμα τῆ  
 χρόνῃ, ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ γενομένου ἐκ  
 γυναικὸς γενομένου ὑπὸ νόμον.

Here then I ask, in the first place, supposing the filiation to have originated in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, would there have been any impropriety in the expression, “ God sent forth his Son ?” If there would not, as I think I may without hesitation say there would not, why should we seek farther ? why should we depart from what is so obvious, and what lies so directly before us, to roam beyond the bounds of all possible knowledge ? We all know that, in order to a true and real filiation, there must necessarily be a conception and birth ; and that where there is no conception and birth, human language will not allow us to say there is a Son. But here evidently, by the testimony of St. Luke, were both ; Jesus was conceived, and born of the Virgin Mary ; and, for the reason assigned by the Evangelist, was therefore to be called the *Son of God*. But I can read of no other reason, of his being so called, assigned by any of the sacred



writers. The passage under consideration neither assigns, nor implies, any other reason of it, but the contrary : for when the fulness of time was come, God ἐξαπέστειλεν ἐκ γυναικος τον υἱον αὐτῆς γενομενον, “ sent forth from a woman, him that was become his Son,” not him that was his Son, eternally generated in the Divine nature : the word γενομενον excludes all prior filiation. And lest we should misapply, or misapprehend, what is here said, the Apostle seems to guard against it by adding γενομενον ὑπο νομον ; so that the υἱον αὐτῆς γενομενον ἐκ γυναικος, was γενομενον ὑπο νομον, not προ παντων αιωνων. This passage, therefore, of the Apostle appears to be in direct opposition to the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation. Opposite also to it is what he says, Romans, c. i. where, speaking of the Son of God, he writes, τῆς γενομενης ἐκ σπερματος Δαβιδ κατὰ σαρκα. Τῆς ὀρισθεντος υἱος Θεου ἐν δυναμει, κατὰ πνευμα ἁγιωσυνης ἐξ ἀναστασεως νεκρων, “ who was according to the flesh of the seed of David, and, through the resurrection from the dead, was definitively shewn or proved to be the Son of God by the power of the Holy Ghost.” The words, I apprehend, are not to be construed as if the *power of the Holy Ghost* was the proof of his being the Son of God, but that the proof was ἐξ ἀναστασεως νεκρων, that he was born the Son of God by the power of the Holy Ghost. For it was by the power of the Holy Ghost that he

was



was born the Son of God, and the resurrection from the dead was the definitive proof that he was so born; and herein the Apostle perfectly accords with both St. Matthew and St. Luke.

If, then, Jesus was limited to be the Son of God by reason of his conception and birth by the power of the Holy Ghost, or, as the Apostle's language is here, *εν δυναμει κατὰ πνευμα ἀγίω-συνης*, which amounts to the same, we surely cannot but be greatly reprehensible if we seek farther, or presume to assign causes different from this, and which are the issues only of our own uncertain speculations. From the Scripture only we have our information that Jesus is the Son of God; by the Scripture only therefore are we to be directed concerning the cause and manner of it; and speculations, without decided positive Scripture proof, are on this subject wholly inadmissible.

And as the Scriptures appear to be totally unacquainted with, and in direct opposition to, the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation, so I believe also were the *Primitive and Apostolical Fathers*; in whose writings there do not appear to be any traces of any such doctrine. In the Epistle of St. Ignatius to the Ephesians, vii. we have a passage that is in as direct opposition to it as is possible, where he speaks of our Lord as *γεννητος και αγεννητος*. The whole passage I will transcribe. *Εἰς ἰατρος ἐστὶν σαρκικὸς καὶ πνευματικὸς, γεννητος*

γεννητος και αγεννητος, εν σαρκι γενομενος Θεος, εν  
 θανατω, ζωη αληθινή, και εκ Μαρίας και εκ Θεου,  
 πρωτον παθης και τότε απαθης.

If the holy Martyr had known any thing of the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation, he durst not have expressed himself in this manner; or if he had, and the doctrine had really been the doctrine of Scripture, he could not have escaped without most severe censure; but no censure has been cast upon him on this account. Indeed in later times men have tried to explain away the expression; but the motive of this being so very evident, little regard is to be paid to their contrivances.

Cotelerius, in his note upon this passage, labours very unsatisfactorily in order to give the sense of *non factus* to αγεννητος; but whether written with a single or a double ν is of no manner of consequence, since, however written, before the signification of *non factus* can be applied to it, it must first signify *ingenitus*. The interpolator of Ignatius, who lived probably somewhere in the fourth century, well knew that the term αγεννητος could not be accommodated to the doctrine then in circulation, with regard to the filiation of our Blessed Lord; and therefore he corrupts and perverts the whole passage, Ιατρος δε ημων εστιν ο μονος αληθινος Θεος, ο αγεννητος και απροσιτος, ο των ολων κυριος του δε μονογενου πατρης και γεννητωρ, and then, in order to destroy  
 all

all possibility of applying *αγεννητος* to Jesus Christ, he adds concerning him, *τον προ αιωνων υιον μονογενη και λογον.*

In his Epistle to the Smyrnæans, his words also are remarkable; where, speaking of our Lord, he says of him, *Αληθως οντα εκ γενους Δαβιδ κατὰ σαρκα, υιον Θεου κατὰ θελημα και δυναμιν Θεου γεγεννημενον αληθως εκ παρθεν.* If we interpret these latter words, as assuredly they may be interpreted, “Born truly the Son of God of the Virgin, according to the will and power of God,” they are in direct opposition to the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation, and express plainly the same doctrine as St. Luke’s. In our printed copies, indeed, the words are pointed so, as if they were not to be interpreted in this manner; but most probably the pointing is wrong, as the word *αληθως* is twice used; “being *αληθως* of the “race of David, according to the flesh, and *αληθως* born the Son of God, of the Virgin, according to the will and power of God.” As he was in truth of the race of David according to the flesh, so was he in truth born the Son of God, of the Virgin.

Clemens, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, xxxii. says, *Εξ αυτου (Θεου scilicet) ο κυριος Ιησους το κατὰ σαρκα.* The expression, perhaps, is singular; but it seems to intimate, that in his conception, *Εξ αυτου εκ ην το κατὰ θεοτητα*, which yet he must have been if he was eternally generated



rated in the Divine nature ; and therefore it appears that Clemens also was a stranger to this doctrine. And this appears yet more plainly by what he says in his second Epistle, ix. Ὁ Ἰησους Χριστος ὁ κυριος, ὁ σωσας ἡμας ὡν μεν το πρωτον πνευμα, εγενετο σαρξ, και ούτως ἡμας εκαλεσεν. Had he known any thing of the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation, or had it been current in his days, he naturally would have said, “ who being *first* the eternal Son of God, became flesh ;” but he says, ὡν μεν το πρωτον πνευμα.

In what remains to us of the Greek of the Epistle of Polycarp, there does not appear to be any thing which requires to be particularly noticed. But in the antient Latin version of this Epistle, xii. we have these words, *Deus autem & pater Domini nostri Jesu Christi ; et ipse sempiternus Pontifex, Dei Filius Christus Jesus, ædificet vos, &c.* This surely does not favour at all of the received doctrine ; for had he known any thing of it, he most probably would have said *Sempiternus Filius Dei*, or *Sempiternus Pontifex & Filius Dei* ; so that it is very probable that he knew nothing of the received doctrine.

In the Pastor of Hermas I have not met with any thing properly applicable to the subject, either the one way or the other ; nor much in the Epistle of Barnabas. There is, indeed, in St. Barnabas one solitary expression, which may be laid hold of by those who favour the doctrine  
of



of an Eternal Filiation, ΟΥΚΑΝ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἔσ-  
 τετο ἡλθε ἐν σαρκί; which seems to imply that  
 he was the Son of God before he came in the  
 flesh. But I do not think that there is much in  
 this. Had it been *κατὰ σάρκα*, it might then  
 have had some little appearance of greater proba-  
 bility; but as it is, it signifies only that the Son  
 of God came, and was manifested by the incar-  
 nation.

I have before observed, that, when in the  
 Scripture it is said that “ God sent his Son,” it  
 is urged that he must have been his Son before  
 he sent him; and so in this passage of St. Bar-  
 nabas it may be urged that he must have been  
 the Son of God, before it could be said that the  
 Son of God came in the flesh; all which is very  
 true in one sense. But there is a fallacy in this  
 matter, which may easily be removed, by consi-  
 dering what the Scripture teaches us, as hath al-  
 ready been shewn; that the Son of God was ge-  
 nerated in the womb of the Blessed Virgin by the  
 union of the *λογος* with man’s nature, through the  
 power of the Holy Ghost; that from *thence* he  
 came ἐν σαρκί; and from *thence* God sent his Son  
 into the world; so that by this most amazing  
 and wonderful generation he was most truly the  
 Son of God prior to his coming in the flesh, and  
 prior to his being sent into the world; which, I  
 apprehend, is so full a solution of the difficulty,  
 that I think we shall have no just cause to ima-  
 gine

gine that St. Barnabas entertained any opinion upon this subject different from the other Apostolical Fathers, who certainly do not appear to have adopted, or to have known any thing of the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation.

Concurring likewise with the Apostolical Fathers is the doctrine of the Apostles' Creed, which, whether composed by the Apostles themselves, or after their times, very strongly proves that the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation was unknown at that time, and plainly teaches that the filiation of the Son of God was in his being "conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary." *I believe* (saith the Creed) *in God, the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord*; and then declaring how, and in what manner, he was the Son of God, it adds, *who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary*; and all in strict conformity with the doctrine of the Evangelists. We all know, that, in order to a true and real filiation, there necessarily must be a conception and birth; and therefore the Creed, having affirmed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, subjoins the manner in which he became the Son of God, by a conception of the Holy Ghost, and a birth of the Virgin Mary; and this with the greatest propriety, that we might not be left to conjecture concerning the manner in which he was the Son of God. Now will it

not

not be a just and true conclusion from hence, that, with a reference to this conception and birth, he is styled *μονογενής*? But then how will this term, thus applied, agree with the generation of a Son of God prior to this eternally in the Divine nature? For *μονογενής* will as truly signify that there was but one generation of the Son of God, as that there was but one Son of God generated.

It must not, however, be dissembled, that soon after these times the doctrine began to make its appearance, and the *λογος* was supposed to have been eternally generated by the Supreme Deity; which seems to have been the doctrine of Justin Martyr, and some others. Justin Martyr was certainly a very respectable character, and a zealous Christian; but, in point of information and judgement, was not quite so accurate as might have been wished. Originally he was a Platonist; and when he became a convert to Christianity, his mind could not discharge itself of those principles which it had imbibed in Plato's school. Hence is it, that, in his endeavour to convince *Trypho* the Jew that Jesus was the Son of God, he launches out into strange unfounded speculations upon the subject; speculations plainly the result of that philosophy which he had imbibed before he became a Christian. *Αρχην*, says he, *πρὸ πάντων τῶν κτισμάτων ὁ Θεὸς γεγεννήκε δυνάμιν τινα ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ λογικην*. And this  
*δυναμὶς,*



δυνάμεις, he says, was denominated the Glory of the Lord, or the Son, or Wisdom, or Angel, or God, or Lord, or Word; and when he appeared in the human form to Joshua, he was called the Captain of the Lord's Host: and he adds, that all these names were given to him on account of his ministering to the Fathers' councils, and because of his having been begotten by the will of the Father. And then in support of this doctrine of the generation of the Son, he produces from Prov. viii. these words, according to the Greek translation, *Κυριος εκτισε με αρχην, οδον αυτε εις εργα αυτου, &c.* by all which he plainly inculcates, although perhaps he might not intend as much, that the Son is a creature, distinguished from other created beings only by his being the first of the creation. Thus the Jew plainly interpreted what he said, and therefore in reply naturally enough says to him, " Let him be the Lord, and Christ, and God, of you Gentiles, who are called Christians: we are the worshippers of the God who made him whom you speak of, and therefore we have no occasion to worship or confess him." (Justin. Dialog. p. 283. 286.) Into such difficulties will all persons be betrayed, and so unsatisfactory will be their arguments, who, maintaining the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation, endeavour to justify the worship of Christ as God. How this doctrine of a Divine Generation originated, never has been,

and



and perhaps never can be, satisfactorily ascertained. That which seems to be the most probable account of its origin, is what I have already suggested, that in the generation of the *Æons* of the Gnostics it had its first origin.

During the Apostolical age, however the errors of the Gnostics were in circulation, they were not, during that age, worked up into any regular system. Their *Æons* they then had, but as yet they were not classed and ranked according to their respective generations. But in process of time, as Error is ever fertile in its inventions, and indefatigable in the distribution of them, their *Æons* became multiplied, and in a regular series were numbered to be thirty, or, as some say, two-and-thirty; all of them inferior to the Supreme God, and at a greater or less distance from him in power or perfection, in proportion as they were distant from him in the series. In the fourth rank of this series was placed the *λογος*, which being in such direct contradiction to what the Evangelist had said, that he was with God, and was God, the Christians opposed themselves against this error, maintaining, I suppose, that the *λογος* was *προ παντων αιωνων*, that he was before all their *Æons*; and the same probably they maintained concerning the Son, of whom they spake as *γενομενος προ παντων αιωνων*, not meaning thereby, as I apprehend, that he was *προ χρονων αιωνων*, but, merely in opposition

to the Gnostics, that he was *superior to all their Æons*. But this term *γενόμενος* degenerating by degrees into *γεννηθεῖς*, it thus introduced an Eternal Generation of the Son, *prior to all the Æons*. I do not suggest this as the certain, but merely as the probable origin of the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation; which, as it appears to have no foundation in Scripture, and to have been unknown to the Fathers of the Apostolical age, so must have owed its introduction into the Christian world to some other cause. But whether to this, or to any other cause, mark the event. They who came over from the Platonic school, having their minds stored with Plato's subtleties and curiosity, when they found this doctrine among the Christians, could not resist the philosophic itch, which they brought with them, of prying more deeply into it, and of examining how it could be, and in what manner; and thus bewildering themselves with the efforts of their own imaginations, they fell into various hypotheses, and introduced a number of heresies, which perhaps otherwise never would have been thought of. Hereby it was that Origen fell into his error concerning the Divine nature of the Son, wherein he is said grievously to have departed from the true Christian faith, and to have opened the way for Arius to broach his doctrine; a doctrine that has produced a controversy in the Church of Christ, which fourteen hundred

hundred years have not been able to bring to a conclusion, and which would not, as I conceive, be concluded in fourteen hundred years more, if the controversy was to be still carried on in the same manner as it hitherto hath been carried on. For while the doctrine of the Eternal Filiation is maintained, all that hath or can be said against Arius or his followers will be all wide of the mark. Neither he nor they pretend that their objection to the Divinity of the Son is derived directly or primarily from the Scripture. The Scripture they appeal to, merely as a collateral proof of the truth of their objections. The root of their objections is placed in the filiation. Here Arius set his foot, and contended, and, as far as I am able to judge, with advantage, against his opponents. They indeed had incontestably the advantage over him in their appeals to the Scripture; but the argument with him had nothing to do with the Scripture, until what related to their doctrine of the Filiation was settled. It was their own doctrine that the Son was eternally generated in the Divine nature: he therefore argued that he must be inferior, on that account, to the Father. For that which generates, must be prior to that which is generated; what is unbegotten, must be superior to that which is not unbegotten. The Father was *αγενητος*, therefore the Son, as being begotten, could not be God, as the Father is. Now what



answer can be given to this, sufficient to destroy the argument? A reference to the Scripture will not meet it, and will be evaded by urging that when Jesus Christ is therein declared to be God, it must be in subservience to the primary idea of his being eternally generated in the Divine nature, whereby he can be God only in a partial degree, and not the *ΑΓΕΝΝΗΤΟΣ ΘΕΟΣ*.

*Οὐκ αἰεὶ ἦν ὁ υἱός, & γὰρ ἦν*, saith Arius, *πρὶν γεννηθῆναι*. This, if the word *γεννηθῆναι* bears the sense which, in human language, it does, and must bear, is unanswerable; so that the Catholic Christians have always been hampered in their disputes with the Arians, by this unfortunate doctrine of an Eternal Filiation. I call it an unfortunate doctrine, because such it certainly hath proved with regard to the Catholic Christians, who have hereby armed and given force and vigour to the shafts of their adversaries.

How valuable the doctrine was to the Arians, and how necessary to their cause, is evident from their strenuous and persevering endeavours that it might be perpetuated, by being made an article in the Churches Creed. In their first attempt for this purpose, they failed; for the venerable Fathers of the Nicene Council would not admit it, although proposed to them by a person of so much weight and influence as Eusebius. But in about 56 years after the Nicene Council, they had better success, and the article became established,

established, as an article of faith, in the Creed of the second General Council at Constantinople. How it gained admission then, it is impossible to ascertain with any degree of accuracy. The additions which have been made to the original Nicene Creed, it is conjectured by Archbishop Usher, were made by the Fathers themselves, or by some of the chiefs of them, after the dissolution of the Council. But as he offers this only as a conjecture, it cannot be admitted to be any thing more than conjecture; and therefore we may be allowed to suggest something which appears to be more probable, with respect at least to the addition of the particular article now under consideration.

During the interval between the first and second General Council, Arianism had prevailed to a most alarming degree; and it is the language, I think, of one of the Fathers—the whole Christian world was amazed at finding itself become Arian. During this interval fell the venerable Hosius; and even Liberius, Bishop of Rome, if he did not subscribe their confession, communicated with the Arians. What wonder, therefore, if the article, during such a period as this, distinguished by the fall of such men, was suffered to have a peaceable admission into the Nicene Creed; and, being found there by the Fathers of the Council of Constantinople, was suffered to remain there as a harmless article of faith,

faith, although not a necessary one ? Harmless it might be thought, because the Creed was guarded by the Homousian doctrine ; forgetting at the same time that the doctrines, like contrary and equal forces, destroyed each other ; for if the one was true, the other could not be true. And this the Arians were very well apprised of, and therefore never made any objection to the doctrine of the Eternal Filiation, but invariably made it an article in all their own Creeds. Arius himself, when he sent his letter to Constantine (ann. 335.) wishing to have his own faith thought in agreement with that of the Nicene Fathers, says, “ We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, and in the Lord, Jesus Christ, his Son, *begotten of him before all worlds*, God the Word.” In the four different Creeds of the Arian Council of Antioch (ann. 341.) they profess to believe in Jesus Christ, “ *begotten of the Father before all worlds ;*” so the same in the Councils of Sirmium and Ariminum ; and so also, I believe, in all the other Creeds of that party, which were in circulation between the first and second General Councils.

Here, then, a question arises, and a very material one. It is, How happened it that the Arians, who disowned the proper Divinity of Jesus Christ, and who maintained that he was *ἐξ ἑκ οὐτῶν*, should adhere so rigorously to this article of the Eternal Filiation, if the doctrine of  
our



our Lord's Divinity at all depended upon it? How happened it, unless it was from a persuasion that it was subversive of the Son's Divinity? For if he was eternally generated, then was he eternally a Son, and then was he eternally posterior to the Father, by whom he was generated; for that which generates, if any meaning appertains to human language, must be prior to that which is generated. This the Arians well knew, and considered; and this also they well knew was not to be answered and confuted by any efforts of human language or reasoning, and therefore they adopted, and so perseveringly maintained the doctrine, which, being maintained by the Catholic Fathers themselves, could not be objected to by them, either in itself, or in the inference derived from it. The connection of the term Eternity with it, could not destroy the signification of the word Generate, which is expressive of an action to which the agent must be prior; and no human language will admit of the words having any different signification. And therefore while the fact of the Eternal Generation was acknowledged, the argument of the Arians, as derived from that fact, could not but be valid and unanswerable. Perplexed, then, and pressed as the Catholic Fathers were with this unanswerable argument of the Arians, it is most truly astonishing that they should not have discovered their own error in adopting, and main-

taining as a fact (for they thundered out anathemas against those who denied it) what has not even the slightest foundation in the Gospel, as far as I have been able to discover, to support it. Had they rejected the fact, as assuredly they ought to have done, it being unsupported by any authority of revelation, their perplexities, upon this occasion, would have been all ended, as would likewise the Arian controversy; but by pursuing a different line of conduct, the controversy has descended to our own times, and seems to be as far from being terminated now, as it was fourteen hundred years ago.

In speaking thus I acknowledge I may, and indeed must appear to be bold, and perhaps rash; but the convictions of my mind, grounded on the authority of the Scripture, will not suffer me to retract. The pillar and ground of the Arian controversy, is the doctrine of a Son eternally generated in the Divine nature. Disown this doctrine, and the controversy is all at an end. The Son of God, saith the Arian, as generated in the Divine nature, must have all the necessary inferiority of a Son, and be posterior to him by whom he was generated; and accordingly so, they say, he is represented to be in the Gospel: for he can do nothing of himself. He came to do the will of him that sent him. If he hath life in himself, it is the Father who gave him this privilege. He does not know all things; and if  
he

he hath all power in heaven and in earth, it is given to him by the Father ; together with many other similar passages ; all which directly coincide with the doctrine of Arius, and are fairly urged in support of it. But drop the imaginary doctrine of an Eternal Filiation, and adopt the true, genuine doctrine of the Evangelist, and all that confusion, which otherwise appears to be in the sacred writings, from our Lord's being represented as inferior, and subordinate, and subject, and yet as being truly God, and God blessed for evermore, vanishes like a vapour before the sun. For it was God, the Word, existing from all eternity with God, who condescended to lay aside his own Divine glory, and to humble and make himself of no reputation ; it was this most gracious and Divine Person, who, by a marvellous birth and filiation, stooped to an union with the nature of man, and to be born that holy thing which was to be called the Son of God. As such, every character that appertaineth to a state of filiation was his. He was subjected, and subordinate, and governed, not by his own will, but by the will of the Father. Καταβέβηκως ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ *voluntarily* having descended out of heaven, and γενομενος υἱὸς ὑπο νόμον he was *sent from the womb* into the world. Γεννητός καὶ ἀγεννητός. As the former, he was *sent* ; as ἀγεννητός, his coming down from heaven was all his own voluntary, uncompelled act. He was the Word, who



who from all eternity was with God. He was the Word who was God, who was *Αληθινος Θεος*; and such he continued to be, notwithstanding his humiliating birth and filiation; for when he took our nature, he neither changed nor lost his own nature, but was perfect God and man united.

Hither, then, let the Arian direct his objections. Here let him try what plausible arguments he can offer against the proper Divinity of the Son of God. His former strong holds are demolished, and he must now either acquiesce with the Catholic Christians, or deny that there is truth in the holy Gospels. Of what use will it be to urge now that the Son is not as old as the Father, or that what generates must be prior to what is generated? The question is nothing of this kind. It is plainly nothing more than, whether it was the Divine and Eternal Word, who ever was with God, and was God, who became flesh, and, by an inexpressible union with our nature, in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, was born, and therefore was denominated the Son of God, agreeable to the most certain and indisputable doctrine both of St. John and of St. Luke? If such is not the doctrine of the Evangelists, let the Arian point out to us wherein we misapprehend it to be such. But if he cannot do this, let him bend down with us, and worship the incarnate Word, casting beneath his  
footstool

footstool all that conceit and philosophical pride, which is apt to lead its votaries into those dark regions, where the light of revelation hath not extended, and which are the habitations only of the most delusive phantasms and deceit.

But it will be necessary for me to observe, that there is a passage (1 Cor. c. viii.) unconnected with the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation, which the Arians, as well as others, are fond of appealing to, as decisive, in their opinion, against the doctrine of our Lord's Divinity. I shall transcribe the whole passage, as it stands in our translation.

“ As concerning therefore the eating of those  
 “ things that are offered in sacrifice to idols,  
 “ we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world,  
 “ and that *there is* none other God but one.

“ For though there be that are called Gods,  
 “ whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be  
 “ Gods many, and Lords many)

“ But to us *there is but* one God, the Father,  
 “ of whom *are* all things, and we in him ; and  
 “ one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are* all  
 “ things, and we by him.”

This passage is thought to be decisive, as determining the objects of the Christian Faith against the errors of Polytheism ; which objects are *God the Father*, and the *Lord Jesus Christ* ; to the former of whom is ascribed sovereign dominion, to the latter instrumental agency.

The

The answer to this is, first, that the passage is not rightly pointed. It ought to be pointed, “ To us there is but one God, the Father of  
 “ whom are all things, and we in him ; and  
 “ one Lord, Jesus Christ, &c.” The Apostle is not by any means drawing the line between God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, or ascertaining the superiority of the one, and the inferiority of the other : all this is quite foreign to his argument. He is arguing entirely against the Heathen Polytheist, and shewing how different the Christian faith was from theirs. They had their variety of Gods, to whom they ascribed a variety of offices and powers ; and they made them parents in their respective departments. Thus Saturn was a *Πατήρ* Jupiter, Neptune, Apollo, &c. but we, saith the Apostle, have not such a variety of Gods. “ To us there is but  
 “ one God ;” and this one God comprehends within himself all that the Heathen ascribe to their multiplicity of Gods : for he is the universal Parent, *ὁ Πατήρ ἐξ ἑ τα πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτον*, where the *Εἰς Θεός* is set in opposition to the *Θεοὶ πολλοί*, and the *ὁ Πατήρ ἐξ ἑ τα πάντα* to the various productive offices which were distributed among these numerous Gods.

So likewise to us there is but *Εἰς Κύριος*, in opposition to the Heathen *Baalim* ; who with them were tutelary *Κυριοί*, and, if I mistake not, *Σωτηρές*. We have, saith the Apostle, only one  
*Κύριος*,



Kυριος, who is Ιησους, or the Σωτηρ Χριστος: so that what the Apostle here saith hath absolutely nothing at all to do with drawing the line of difference between the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; and the passage, when appealed to, is totally perverted in its meaning, and misinterpreted.

But it will be said, whether it was intended or not by the Apostle as any part of his argument, to draw the line between God the Father and Jesus Christ, still the line is drawn, and the Θεος is he ἐξ ἑ τα παντα, and the Κυριος is δι' ἑ.

Most true and certain it is that Θεος and Κυριος have different significations; but I do not see what this is to the purpose, for Θεος is God alone: Κυριος is the Θεος και Ανθρωπος. Is the Θεος in the Θεανθρωπος less God because of his union with the Σαρξ Ανθρωπινη? Prove this. Prove that the amazing condescension of God, in humbling himself to an union with our nature, so far degraded him in his Divine nature, that he was less in his essence God than the Father.

But if it did not, why is it not said of him, as well as of the Father, ἐξ ἑ τα παντα?

The answer is obvious: because those words can be pronounced only of the Godhead alone; but our Lord Jesus Christ was not the Godhead alone: he was the Θεανθρωπος, the Mediator, God and man united, δι' ἑ τα παντα; and as such,

such, that is as Mediator, as *Κυριος*, it could not have been said with truth of him *ἐξ ὧν τα πάντα*. For until the *λογος σαρκὶς ἐγενετο*, there was no mediatorial office, and consequently no Mediator ; and therefore if *ἐξ ὧν τα πάντα* had been said of the Mediator, the *Θεανθρωπος*, it could not have been the truth.

The whole matter, then, of the Apostle's argument, appears to be this : With the Heathen there was a great variety of Gods, to each of whom, in his respective department, was ascribed a parental authority and dominion. With us there is only one God alone ; and he only hath the whole of that parental authority and dominion which was distributed among them. With the Heathen, also, there were *κυριοι πολλοι*, who acted as mediators between them and the superior Gods. But to us there is only *Εἰς Κυριος*, one Lord, one Mediator, Jesus Christ. So also the Apostle speaketh, 1 Tim. ii. 5. *Εἰς γὰρ Θεος, εἰς καὶ μεσιτης Θεου καὶ ἀνθρώπων, Ἀνθρωπος Χριστος Ἰησους*. The character of *Κυριος*, or *Μεσιτης*, was undoubtedly distinct from that of the Godhead ; and therefore what was appropriate to the one, could not be so to the other. But is this any proof that the Divinity of Jesus Christ is inferior to that of God ? If men can be prevailed upon to reject the doctrine of our Lord's Divinity by such arguments as these, we can only lament the weakness and poverty of their understandings. For the whole of the Arian argument

argument from this passage, when properly resolved, is neither more nor less than this : Θεός and Κύριος are not words of the same idea. But our Lord is said to be the Κύριος δι' ἃ τὰ πάντα, therefore he is not Θεός, of whom it is said ἐξ ἃ τὰ πάντα. And by the very same rule it may be argued, Κύριος and Ἀνθρωπος are not words of the same idea. But our Lord is decidedly declared in Scripture to be Ἀνθρωπος, therefore he is not Κύριος. Such arguments one would think speak plainly enough for themselves, without requiring to be confuted.

But I am further to observe, that, when the Arian appeals to the passage which we have been considering, if it has any validity at all against the doctrine of our Lord's Divinity, it operates as strongly against himself and his own doctrine ; and that if it is decisive in the one case, it is as decisive in the other. Arius himself professed to believe not only in God the Father, but also in God the Word ; against which faith the Εἰς Θεός must militate as strongly as against the catholic faith. But it militates against neither : and the whole mistake in the application of the passage seems to have arisen from a supposition that when ὁ Πατήρ is annexed to Θεός, it is a mark or designation of the Deity exclusively. But positively I believe it may be affirmed, that in no one instance in the New Testament is the Πατήρ denoted to be Θεός exclusively.



clusively. The Εἰς Θεός is undoubtedly the Πατήρ ἐξ ἧ τα πάντα; and Θεός undoubtedly is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But as there is Θεός Πατήρ, so is there Θεός Λόγος, and Πνεῦμα ὁ Θεός; and while this is the doctrine of the New Testament, as it most assuredly is, it can be little short of the stubbornness of obstinacy to contend that the Πατήρ is Θεός exclusively.

But let me not be supposed to charge the Arians of the present day with obstinacy of this kind. They are, I am confident, many of them persons of real principle, and reject the doctrine of the Trinity, from a persuasion that it is not the doctrine of the New Testament. There they see repeatedly instrumental agency ascribed to Jesus Christ; there they see a degree of inferiority, and, as it were, impotence, attributed to him, which they think is totally inconsistent with his being ὁμοῦσιος τῷ Πατρί; and they are strengthened and confirmed in this their opinion, by the received doctrine of the Filiation, which furnishes them with an argument which never has, and I am persuaded never can, be satisfactorily answered. For if he was generated, his generation must have been posterior to that by which he was generated. Obstructed by these difficulties, and precluded from a solution of them by reason of the received doctrine of the Filiation, what wonder is it if they have hesitated to receive the catholic doctrine? What wonder is it if

if they endeavour to accommodate the language of St. Paul to their misapprehended conceptions of the Son of God? For the progress of the mind, when under misapprehension, is just the same as when in full possession of certainty and truth; and it displays the same eagerness and zeal in accommodating to error, as to truth itself. We must not therefore imagine that the opposition of the Arians to the Catholic doctrine *always* proceeds from a determined perverseness of spirit, obstinately refusing to surrender itself to truth. It often proceeds from a very different cause: from the original and primary idea which prevails in their minds, and which, while it prevails there, being in direct opposition to truth, truth itself will appear to them to be falsehood. Thus while the leading idea in their minds is that the Son of God is a Son eternally generated in the Divine nature, and while they see in the Gospel instrumental agency ascribed to him, and that degree of subordination and inferiority, which by necessity attaches itself to the character of Son, their minds of course revolt from the catholic doctrine, which it is impossible they can receive while they maintain the doctrine of the Eternal Generation, interpreted as they interpret it, with its consequences. Remove this difficulty, for it is the root from whence his error springs, and the Arian will no longer continue to be such.

Now if this difficulty can be removed, why should it not? Why should a division and controversy be suffered to continue among Christians, when it may with so much ease and certainty be dismissed? That we have sufficient authority for rejecting the received doctrine of the Filiation, I imagine will be denied by none, who will allow that it is not sanctioned by the Scriptures, which teach a doctrine that is in direct opposition to it: that it is not countenanced by the primitive and apostolical Fathers, who appear to have been entire strangers to it: that it makes no part of the primitive Christian Creed, which is altogether in opposition to it: that for more than three hundred and twenty-five years it was no authenticated doctrine of the Church; and that at the Nicene Council it was reprobated, by being rejected by the venerable Fathers then assembled. If this should be allowed, and how it can be denied I own I see not, what will there be to oppose against it? There will be the uninterrupted admission of the doctrine by the Church for more than fourteen hundred years. The weight of this, I scruple not to own, I severely feel; and if I was less persuaded than I am of the truth of what I have advanced, it would terrify me from the publication of these papers. But I have not the smallest doubt upon the subject. To me the Scriptures, the primitive Fathers and Creed, and the conduct of the  
Nicene



Nicene Fathers, are irresistibly plain and convincing; and therefore while my mind is impelled by these convictions, the reader, I trust, will make those allowances for me which candour will suggest, if it should turn out that I am mistaken.

With regard to the doctrine's having been received in the Church for more than fourteen hundred years, it must be remembered, that time and years will not cause that to be true which is false; and that it is possible to persist in error for a length of time, as well as in that which is not erroneous. It is also to be remembered, with what very great reverence and estimation the world formerly submitted itself to the decrees of General Councils, which were believed to be infallible; and therefore that it is neither impossible nor improbable that error should have lain concealed and unnoticed under the covert of such an infallible sanction. Men in those days, who wished to be considered as true members of the Church, would not only not see, but not even imagine, that there could be any thing erroneous in a doctrine ratified by the decree of a General Council, well knowing to what anathemas they must subject themselves, if they dared to call in question the truth of its decrees. This therefore may well account for the silence of the orthodox Fathers, if any of them entertained any suspicions concerning this doctrine.

But with regard to others, who valued not the anathemas of the Church, the doctrine was rejected *in toto*. They would not allow that God could have a Son; and maintained upon that subject the same doctrine as hath been but too successfully propagated over a great part of the world, under the banner of Mahomet. Sergius, a Nestorian monk, who denied that Jesus Christ was the *Son of God*, was an instructor and assistant of Mahomet; and it was the doctrine and practice of the Mahometans, at their first appearance, “ never to shew mercy to any who “ said that God had a Son, and joined a partner “ with God.”

*Photinus*, who was prior to Nestorius, in the year 344 denied the doctrine of the Eternal Filiation; maintaining that there was no filiation until our Lord’s conception and birth of the Blessed Virgin. There is something extraordinary in the account which the ancients have left us of this man. He was Bishop of Sirmium, a man of great learning and abilities, and of a most persuasive eloquence; but, for controverting this article of the Filiation, he was proceeded against as a most obnoxious heretic; and in the first council of Sirmium, being violently charged with holding all the errors of Sabellius and Paulus Samosatenus, he was anathematized and deposed from his bishopric. But the people, in their great zeal and love for him, would not  
suffer

suffer the decree of the Council to take place, and retained him, notwithstanding, in his see, where he continued till the year 351, when a second Council was held there, at the instance of Photinus himself, in the presence of the Emperor Constantius. Here every thing was again carried against him: he was again deposed, and by the Emperor's order sent into banishment. His doctrine, as represented by Dr. Cave in his *Historia Literaria*, was *Christum esse ψιλον ανθρωπον et ex Mariâ initium habuisse, ex quo in ipsam supervenit Spiritus Sanctus*. And if such were his principles and doctrine, it cannot be denied but that he was justly deposed. But there is very great reason to imagine that these were not his principles, and that in the accusations brought against him, he has been overcharged; for it is pretty generally allowed that he acknowledged the λογος to have been co-eternal and co-essential with God, and that the λογος became flesh; and therefore how this can possibly agree with his holding the errors for which he was condemned by the Council of Sirmium, I see not. It is very much to be feared that the whole of his offence consisted in rejecting the doctrine of the Eternal Filiation; a doctrine which the Arians, who at this time carried every thing before them, would not suffer to be controverted with impunity; and therefore, in order to make him as obnoxious to the Catholics



as he was to themselves, they involved him, in their charge, in all the errors of Sabellius and Paul of Samosata; and hence, when Constantius, with the Arians, deposed and banished him, the Catholics, both at that time and afterwards, approved of what was done. He wrote many things both in Greek and Latin; and one book in particular against all heresies. Had this reached down to our times, we should have been better able, and with greater certainty, to have determined what his opinions really were; but as we are at present circumstanced, we must be content with conjecture and probability only; and that leads us to ascribe the whole of his error, if such it may be called, to the rejecting the doctrine of the Eternal Filiation; a doctrine on which the Arian cause entirely depended, and which the Catholics had now suffered to be introduced into their Creeds; and therefore they also became adverse to all who opposed it.

I have mentioned this instance of Photinus, in order to shew that the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation was opposed even in those early days, and in answer to the question which may be asked, How happens it that no one ever discovered the error of the doctrine till these modern times? The error of it was discovered and opposed during the prevalence of the Arian party; and they who opposed it were by that party persecuted as heretics. It was opposed even after  
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that party had fallen from their great power; and there were persons, I think, so late as St. Austin's time, who denied that there was any filiation till our Lord's conception and birth of the Blessed Virgin. These, it is true, the good Father brands as heretics; and no wonder, as the doctrine of the Filiation was now become an established article of the Creed, with which as he himself acquiesced, he could not deem those to be other than heretics who opposed it: and after his time, the Church, becoming daily greater and more powerful, would not suffer any article which it had established to be called in question. Hence they who might have had any objection to this particular article, suppressed it; that they might not become subject to those severities which are terrible even to read, but were much more terrible in the execution of them.

Let no one imagine, that, because I oppose the received doctrine of the Filiation, I assume to myself a greater degree of wisdom than the wisdom of all antiquity. Far, very far from it. Truly venerable was the wisdom of the ancient Fathers; and all deference short of a slavish submission is most certainly due to their opinions. Very great respect also is due to the decrees of General Councils; but their decrees are not always infallible. That they both may and have erred in matters of the greatest consequence, is the doctrine of the Church of England;

land; so that a doctrine is not therefore true merely because it is sanctioned by a General Council. We have a more infallible guide, by which we are to be determined in what is truth; and vain is the sanction of a Council to any doctrine which is not sanctioned by the unerring word of Revelation. And this sanction the article concerning the Filiation, I apprehend, has not; on the contrary, *as it is interpreted*, it is in direct opposition to what is revealed in the holy Gospels. I say as it is interpreted, for it certainly may be so interpreted as to have nothing objectionable in it, except that it is superfluous and unnecessary. The Greek will fairly admit of being interpreted "begotten of the Father before, i. e. above all the Æons," *πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων*. And our English may as lawfully be interpreted, of the eternal decree of the Divine mind, "Begotten of the Father before all worlds," by that decree which David, in the second Psalm, was authorised to reveal to us; and herein we shall do nothing more than what we are obliged to do, when Jesus is called the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world. Hence, in rejecting the doctrine of the Filiation, as it is received and interpreted, we shall do nothing injurious to the credit of the Church, *salva erit fides Ecclesiæ*, protected by that overruling providence of God, which would not suffer *absolute and unavoidable error* to be sanctioned



tioned by its Creed ; for error there will be none, except what will remain entirely with ourselves, if we put an interpretation upon the words of the Creed which the Gospel will not warrant. We are not unavoidably compelled to put a construction upon the words, as signifying that a generation of the Son of God actually took place before all worlds. We may, and lawfully we may, interpret them as referring to the decree of the Divine mind, which was before all worlds ; and then the article is in no respect opposite to the doctrine of the Gospel, or to the tenor of the Scriptures in general. It is always in our power, and lawful for us, when words are fairly capable of two senses, to adopt that sense which shall appear to us to be most consonant with truth. In the present instance, that the words will admit of two different interpretations, is indisputable, and therefore we have our choice whether of the two is to be preferred ; and if, by referring them to the decree of the Divine mind, they become freed from that opposition to the doctrine of the Scripture with which otherwise they may be charged, there cannot be a doubt but that we ought to refer them to it.

If it should be said, that, by referring them in this manner, we shall give a sense to the words which the framers of the Creed never intended should be conveyed by them, perhaps it may be so. But what then ? Must their intention bind us ? Our faith is to be founded on Divine Revelation

velation and Scripture truths, not on the intention of fallible men. But it is not quite certain that it was the intention of the Fathers at Constantinople to limit the sense of the words to an Eternal Generation in the Divine nature ; for in the Creeds which were circulated before the Council was held, the article under consideration was thus expressed, *τον εκ της Πατρος γεννηθεντα προ παντων των αιωνων τετεσιν εκ της υσιας της Πατρος* : but in the Creed established by the Council, the latter words *τετεσιν*, &c. which would have fixed it as their intention that the article should express an actual generation in the Divine nature, are omitted. The reason assigned of this omission by some learned men, does not seem to be quite admissible. They tell us that it was omitted because it would have been tautological, the same thing being implied in the word *ὁμοῦσιος*. But surely *ὁμοῦσιος* does not signify the same as *γεννηθεντα εκ της υσιας της Πατρος* ; so that, for any thing that appears to the contrary, the Fathers might have omitted the words under consideration, as being unwilling to fix absolutely the sense of the article *γεννηθεντα προ παντων των αιωνων*. Whether, however, they did or not, the sense of the article is not so certainly fixed in the Creed as to preclude us from interpreting it of the decree of the Divine mind ; and if it allowably may be so interpreted, no Christian ought to hesitate a moment about giving it the interpretation, since hereby he will be freed from professing

ing to believe what the Gospel hath not required him to believe, and from a faith which appears to be totally unauthorised by any revelation from God.

One word more upon this matter, as I wish to meet every objection, however frivolous, which may be made to our interpreting the words under consideration of the decree of the Divine mind. It may be said, that by giving them this interpretation we shall be guilty of a degree of prevarication, which in a profession of faith most assuredly ought to have no place. For when we say that the son of God was begotten of the Father before all worlds, we profess to believe as a certain fact the Eternal Generation; but when we put this interpretation on the words, we must necessarily profess a very different faith, and a faith which the words themselves do not express. In answer to this I am to observe, that herein we shall do nothing more than what we are often accustomed, and indeed obliged to do upon many other occasions. He that at *night* says, Give us *this day* our daily bread, cannot have a meaning precisely answering to the words by which he expresses himself. When St. Paul says, 2 Tim. i. 9. "that Grace was *given us*, in Christ Jesus, before the world began," and Titus i. 2. "that God promised that eternal life, on which our hope is founded, before the world began," how can we interpret these expressions otherwise,



wife, than by applying them to the decree and purpose of the Divine mind? Will there be any prevarication in this? Assuredly not: so neither will there be in referring the words “begotten before all worlds,” to the determination and purpose of the Divine mind, who is generally represented to us, in the New Testament, as having predetermined our salvation, by Christ Jesus, from all eternity.

What other objection the ingenuity of man may invent against giving the article this interpretation, I know not; nor shall I stay to enquire. It is to be lamented that the article ever gained any admission into the Creed; but since it is there, and hath descended to us through such a series of ages, it is not only allowable, but even incumbent upon us to give it such an interpretation as shall be consistent with Scripture and with truth. To expunge it altogether, would be too bold and too hazardous an attempt, and, moreover, is not by any means necessary, as we can give a sense to it which in every respect is justifiable: and as that is the case, every man who thinks with me, will, when he repeats the Creed, give it that sense, and he who does not, will abound in his own sense; and if he is satisfied in his own mind, will not be interrupted. So long as he has no controversy with the Arians, his persevering in the old opinion may perhaps be attended with no inconvenience; but if  
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he attempts, under the influence of this opinion, to defend the doctrine of the Divinity of the Son of God against them, it cannot be but that he must be foiled. *Filiation* is, by necessity, subjection, subordination, and inferiority ; and such it ever must continue to be, as long as the language of human beings prevails, and is intelligible ; and therefore if the Son of God was from all eternity in a state of filiation, he was from all eternity in a state of subjection, subordination, and inferiority : and then, however he may be said to be in substance like unto the Father, yet he cannot be said to be, what I most firmly believe that he is, equal in his Godhead in every respect to the Father.

To the Arian, then, I say, I disown your doctrine of an Eternal Filiation. I deny it to be any doctrine either of the Scripture or of primitive Christianity. I acknowledge the truth of what you say, that in respect of filiation a Son cannot be as old, or otherwise than inferior to his Father ; and that in respect of filiation a Son cannot have any existence until he is begotten : and I say that our Lord Jesus Christ had no existence as *a Son* until he was conceived and born of the Blessed Virgin : but I say that he had an existence prior to that event, although not *as a Son*, yet as God. That he was always *εν αρχη* with God, and that he was God ; that he became flesh, was *born*, and by his *birth* became a  
Son ;

*Son* ; and by that birth subjected himself to all the consequences of a state of filiation, to all its subjection, subordination, and inferiority ; but nevertheless he still continued to be God after, as he was before, the incarnation ; to be God the Son, as he was *εὐ ἀρχῇ* God the Word. What will, or can, the Arian oppose against this ? Will he say that God the Word could not, if he thought fit, submit to be born, and to become God the Son ? or will he say, that by this submission his Divine existence was annihilated ? or will he say, that he was no otherwise God than as he was the Son of God ? But his Divinity was not the consequence of his Filiation, but his Filiation, and his becoming the Son of God, and God the Son, was the consequence of his being God from all eternity, as the doctrine of St. John most manifestly teacheth us. For as he was God prior to the incarnation, therefore when he submitted to become incarnate, and to be born *a Son*, he was, and by necessary consequence must be, God the Son.

Away then with all those groundless objections to the proper Divinity of our God and Lord Jesus Christ, with which Arianism hath infected and perplexed the minds of Christians. Away with all those idle conceits, whereby he is represented as imperfect in his Godhead ; as God only in part, as if he had not the full measure of Divinity. The doctrine of the Scripture,

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ture, and by that only we are to be guided upon this awful subject, is plainly otherwise—that he existed from all eternity with God, and that he was God. Will any one, then, who receives the doctrine of Scripture, be so infatuated as to say, that, by reason of his condescending mercy to mankind, he became diminished in his Godhead; and that thereby he ceased to have the full measure of Divinity? This either he must say, or submit himself to the true catholic doctrine, that he is very and eternal God, co-equal and co-essential with the Father, unless he chooses to revert to the arguments which may be derived from the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation. But these will be all useless and idle, unless he can bring direct and unquestionable proof from Scripture of the truth of the doctrine. For until he hath fully established this, and beyond the reach of controversy, he cannot be heard.

It is true, the philosophic mind, which delighteth in attending to the dictates of what is called *rational Christianity*, will draw back from the representation here given. It has established a criterion of the Deity within itself, and from thence it argues, as if from the plenitude of truth. If the Deity be as we conceive him to be, perfect and supreme, what will become of his Godhead when he is subjected and inferior, and not omniscient? What, indeed? The answer will be, that he will then become what it  
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is impossible he should be on the principles of such a philosophic mind. He will become what *rational Christianity* will not suffer him to be. But here let me with the philosopher recovered from his sad delusion. Rational Christianity! I thought our Christianity had been a REVEALED *Christianity*. The world never yet heard of the promulgation of any other Christianity. Whither then, philosopher, art thou gone astray? or what is it you mean when you make use of the word Christianity? Do you mean that system of religion which is derived to us from revelation in the Gospel? If you do, what occasion is there for the epithet *rational*? Surely there cannot be two species of Christianity; the one rational, and the other absurd and irrational. There cannot be a *rational revealed* Christianity, and an *irrational revealed Christianity*. Why then do you harp with so much consequential, I must say, impertinence, upon the words *rational Christianity*; “wishing, as you say, to see Christianity settled on a rational foundation, that it may be worthy of God?” Is not then Christianity settled on a rational foundation in the Gospel? Will it not be worthy of God, until it shall have been pruned and ameliorated by your exertions? O foolish child of pride, descend from these towering heights unto which self-conceit and the wisdom of your own imagination have raised you. Consider, I pray you,

Ακυστον φιλοσοφε. We are all of us, although settled upon this lower earth, connected with the invisible world, the world of spirits: of this we neither do nor can know any thing while we are in the body, otherwise than by information. The utmost stretch of the human mind will not reach to the throne of God; neither is the world of spirits subjected to our sensible perceptions. Whatever knowledge therefore we may have of them, it must be all derived to us from information; and this information, if fully authenticated to us to come from God and the invisible world, what can we, what shall we dare to urge against its truth? What signify all the workings and contortions of our minds, when exerted against that information which is authenticated to us to come from Heaven? Are our minds the efficient of a revelation, or does it depend upon them? Will not God and the invisible world be other than such as our minds appoint them to be? How involved must he be in the darkness of philosophical error, and how insensible of his own sad situation, who can maintain that God must be that alone which an uninformed mind chooses to determine that he shall be? If God and the world of spirits existed only as the creation of our minds, no idea of them would be admissible, but such as our minds should adjudge to them. But so entirely is it the reverse, that they have their existence without us, and ante-



cedent to any idea that we may have of them. When therefore the knowledge of them is communicated to us on the certain grounds of an undoubted revelation from Heaven, our minds are altogether unoperative, and are only the receptacles of that information which the revelation communicates to us ; and therefore we have nothing to do but to acquiesce implicitly, being incompetent to determine any thing but with regard to the reality of the revelation. Hence if the revelation is that the Son of God is God the Son, the mind hath no employment for itself on this occasion but what consists in the acknowledgement of its truth ; for whether it can or cannot be so, the mind hath no powers whereby to determine. Powers it hath sufficient to determine whether the communication is from Heaven or not ; but the thing communicated lies all beyond its reach. What may be the constitution of the eternal nature, other than as we are informed, we know not : of finite nature, the nature of man, we are able to pronounce determinately. We can determine physically that it is impossible for him, as he is constituted, to tread the air or the sea as upon a solid. We can pronounce with assurance that, as he is at present constituted, he cannot pass through a solid without being impeded. We know that he is limited in respect of place, and that he cannot be in more than one at the same time.

time. These, with many other things, we can determine with infallible certainty and assurance, because we know the nature of man. But when we are told any thing concerning the existing nature of God, we can determine nothing beyond what we are told : all beyond this is involved in clouds and darkness. To pronounce therefore with regard to what we are told, on the authority of revelation, concerning a nature with which we are otherwise totally unacquainted, that it is irrational or impossible, must be the suggestion rather of insanity than of philosophy. Mad indeed would he be who should say, that what the veil conceals from his eyes hath no existence, or only such an existence as his fancy chooses to determine for it. What, I ask you, are the thoughts of a person far distant from you ? Will you say, because he is at a distance from you, that he has no thoughts at all ; or when he communicates his thoughts to you, that they were impossible to have been in his mind ; that there was a physical impossibility of the mind's being exercised by any thoughts. In your senses you certainly would not say this ; and yet you think yourself perfectly in your senses when you argue that it is impossible that the existing nature of God should be, what a messenger from God himself informs you that it assuredly is. Remember, as from yourself, you know not what it is : your very remote distance from it, and the

veil that is before your eyes, prevent you from having any perception of it. When therefore the owner of this most stupendous nature authorises a revelation of himself to you, if it is not madness, I know not what else it can be, to argue against the truth and possibility of that which is revealed. Madness it most assuredly is, when you cannot possibly know any thing to the contrary, to say, that the Word, the Divine Λόγος, who in union with our nature is the Son of God, cannot with the Holy Ghost be God in unity with the Father. It is the madness of a philosophic mind; the madness of a mind led astray *εν πανουργια πιθανολογιας*. We have no Christianity, no Christian religion but what is derived to us from the sacred Scriptures; and a religion derived from any other source is not Christianity. While the fautors, therefore, of what is called rational Christianity, are pluming themselves on the derivation of their religion from rational principles, independent of revelation, they are condemning themselves; for the holy Gospel is not founded on the wisdom of man, but of God.

Upon this principle, and that I may revert to my subject, no doctrine is to be admitted among Christians as an article of their religious faith, which is not fully and decidedly authorised by the revelation of this divine wisdom; and therefore if the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation  
hath



hath not such authority, the Christian will be highly culpable in maintaining it. He is under no obligation of maintaining it from the article which is in the Creed, since that admits very obviously of being interpreted differently; and why he should not interpret it according to the interpretation which it will so obviously admit of, I own I see not.

Let it be observed, that the doctrine we are considering is by no means necessary to Christianity; and that the Gospel dispensation will be what it is without it; that there will be a Son of God, and that the Redeemer of fallen man will be God incarnate, with this difference only, that the incarnate God will not be God only in some partial respect, but in the full measure of Divinity; not in the sense of Arius and his followers, but in that fulness of Divinity which is ascribed to him by the sacred writers.

The prejudice of long-rooted opinions will not, I own, easily be removed. The mind must have time to reconcile itself to a different train of thought from that to which it hath been accustomed; to recover, as it were, from that trance of error with which perhaps it may for a length of time have been subdued. It is not therefore to be expected that men should change their opinions upon this subject of the Filiation without great reluctance, neither, if they should hesitate, ought they to be blamed for it. The in-

terpretation put upon the article in the Nicene Creed, hath been maintained in the Church for a very long series of years, and of course cannot but have impressed upon the mind a strong and venerable prejudice in favour of it. I acknowledge and feel this most sensibly myself. But truly venerable as these opinions are, they are not superior to truth, neither ought they to be maintained in opposition to it ; and if they cannot be justified to be true by the Scripture, nor by the doctrines of the first and primitive Church of Christ, it can be no presumption in us to say that they do not merit that veneration which is paid to them. That they are not in this instance justified by the Scripture, may perhaps be affirmed to have been proved ; because it has been proved that the Scripture doctrine is in direct opposition to them. That they are not justified by the doctrines of the first and primitive Christian Fathers, hath also been proved ; and in opposition to this, I see not what can be offered that will be of any validity. The passages usually produced from Scripture in favour of an Eternal Filiation, do not prove the doctrine ; neither are they at all applicable to it, otherwise than as you first preconceive the doctrine yourself. The question is not whether you can make any particular passage of Scripture bend to the purpose of your preconception, but whether you can justify the truth of your preconception by  
any

any plain, explicit declaration of Scripture, that a Son of God was eternally generated in the Divine nature. This, if you can do it, will be decisive; but arguments drawn from any other source will all prove fallacious and insufficient.

Let it be remembered, that the whole knowledge we have of a Son of God is entirely derived to us from the New Testament: that prior to the promulgation of the Gospel mankind were never taught to consider the Deity as the *Father of a Son*. Our information therefore upon this subject must all be derived to us from the Gospel; and if the Gospel teaches us any where that a Son was eternally generated in the Divine nature before all worlds, then must we undoubtedly submit, and embrace such doctrine as truth. But where, throughout the whole New Testament, is any such doctrine inculcated? A Son of God is announced to us. Jesus is declared to be that Son. When, and the manner how he was born the Son of God, is plainly declared to us; and who he was, and what he existed before he was born the Son of God. But not a syllable is said of his having been eternally the Son of God, before he was born in time the Son of God. On the contrary, it is expressly said that he was the *λογος*; that he always was such; and that the *λογος* was not *υιος*, but *Θεος*. Surely, if it had been the truth, the Evangelist would have said that he was the *υιος αιωνιος*, or *υιος εν αρχη*



Θεός: but in direct opposition to any such doctrine, in the most decisive manner he says, ΘΕΟΣ ἦν ὁ λόγος. By what authority then are we to say that the λόγος ἐν ἀρχῇ was not Θεός, but υἱός Θεός? But this we certainly do say, when we assert the doctrine of the Eternal Filiation. From whence did Justin Martyr derive his notion, that “ In the beginning, before all creation, the Deity γεγεννηκε δύναμιν τινα ἐξ ἑαυτῆς λογικην, and that this δύναμις was, among other titles, denominated the Word?” Either from Philo, probably, or Plato; but most assuredly not from the Scripture. The passage which he produces from the book of Proverbs, will not justify him in his conceit; neither will it prove what he wishes to prove by it. The passage itself is figurative: it is a very beautiful, but figurative personification of wisdom; and its object is to declare, that wisdom is and ever was with God; that it not only was with him in the several creative exertions of his power, but that it was always and from all eternity essentially with him, and inseparable from him. But where in this do we discover the doctrine which Justin endeavours to derive from it? where that he generated from all eternity a Son in his own Divine nature, or a δύναμιν τινα ἐξ ἑαυτῆς λογικην. It is true, in the passage, as he quotes it from the Septuagint, it is said, Προ δε παντων των βενων γεννα με. But this translation is not justified by the Hebrew, as  
neither

neither is our English translation. חוללתי does not signify γεννα με, or *sum formata*, according to the lexicons, or *I was brought forth*, according to our translation ; but *parturivi*, “ I was productive.” So also at the 23d verse the translators seem to have improperly interpreted the word נסכתי, to which they have given a passive signification, “ I was set up.” In the second Psalm, ver. 6, they interpret it actively ; and so they ought to have interpreted it here. Pagninus, in this place, properly translates it *habui principatum* ; *I prevailed, I had the controul*. Read the whole passage thus rendered, and what objection will lie to it ?

“ The Lord possessed me in the beginning  
“ of his way, before his works of old.

“ I had the controul from everlasting ; from  
“ the beginning, or ever the earth was.

“ When there were no depths I was pro-  
“ ductive : when there were no fountains,  
“ abounding with water.

“ Before the mountains were settled ; before  
“ the hills was I productive.”

The reader, if he attends to the whole of the passage, will perceive that throughout wisdom is represented as *acting*, not as the patient ; and therefore to give a passive signification to the words above noticed, is to break in upon the harmony of the whole ; and this being admitted, it will appear that the conceit of Justin, and of all those

those who have followed him in the same line, is wholly groundless and unsupported.

That the passage, under this figurative personification of wisdom, may very fairly be applied to the Eternal Word, the Divine Λογος, I most readily acknowledge; for, experienced as we have that his delights have been with the sons of men, it is almost impossible for us not to see how applicable it is to him. But according to the Septuagint, or our English translation, the application of it to him is wholly inadmissible; inasmuch as the γεννα με of the Septuagint, and “was brought forth,” of the English, so entirely disagree with the words of St. John, who plainly says, Εν αρχη ΗΝ ὁ λογος, neither that he was begotten, nor that he was brought forth, but that he existed.

Justin also avails himself of a passage in the 53d of Isaiah, where, according to our translation, it is written, “who shall declare his generation?” apprehending its purport to be, “who shall describe the manner in which he was generated?” He urges it in support of his conceit, that the Deity had generated ἐξ ἑαυτε δυναμιν τινα λογικην. But what the translators render *generation*, has no such signification. Properly, γιν signifies the time, age, or perhaps even the place in which a person resides, but never, as far as I am able to discover, does it signify the descent, or the generated origin of a person. The  
Greek



Greek translators render the word γενεα, which being as equivocal as our English word generation, Justin the more easily made it subservient to the purposes of his own opinion. However, not to dwell any farther on the mistakes of this worthy Father, which are both many and various, and have been noticed by many writers, both ancient and modern, I shall only detain the reader while I lay before him a summary of my own ideas on the subject of the Filiation.

I. If the received doctrine of the Filiation is true, then must FATHER always have been what the Arians suppose it to be; the essential and discriminating character of the Deity. But for more than 4000 years prior to our Saviour's birth of the Blessed Virgin, no such discriminating character of the Deity was known to mankind. God was known, and acknowledged to be the universal Parent of all things; but as the Father of a proper Son, nothing of the kind was either known or acknowledged till the event of our Lord's conception and birth. Until therefore that event had taken place, we have no authority from Revelation for saying that *the Father* is the essential and discriminating character of the Deity; nor of course have we any revealed authority for the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation. When therefore we talk of a generation of the Deity from himself, whether we call that generation a Δυναμις, or Λογος, or Υιος, or whatever

ever else, we have no ground or authority at all for it. The whole is nothing but the conceit of a busy curiosity, restlessly inquisitive after what has not been communicated to it, and liable to be as erroneous as it is impertinent.

2. The doctrine of an Eternal Filiation does not appear to me to be any doctrine of the New Testament; on the contrary, the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Luke, and St. John, appear to be in direct opposition to any such doctrine: and with regard to any passages in the New Testament, which may seem to accord with the doctrine, let it be remembered that they do not teach or propose it to our faith. The whole that can be said of them is, that if the doctrine itself is true, they may be interpreted as in agreement with it; but as this is no proof that the doctrine is true, therefore it will be no argument in favour of an Eternal Filiation; for the admission of which there will still be wanting *revealed authority*.

3. The doctrine hath no countenance or support in the writings of the primitive Apostolical Fathers, or in the Creed of the Church, commonly called the Apostles' Creed. Justin Martyr, towards the middle of the second century, is the first in whose writings there is any appearance of the doctrine; and in them it is entirely built upon a misinterpreted passage in the Old Testament, inaccurately translated by the Seventy:

venty: and if in the writings of those who succeeded to the times of Justin we find the doctrine received and maintained, that will not alter the case; for if it was wrong and without foundation in his writings, it is equally so in theirs.

4. However the doctrine might have been countenanced by particular Doctors of the Church, it was nevertheless disowned and rejected by the Council of Nice. Proposed to the Council it certainly was by Eusebius; and as it was not admitted to make an article in the Creed of the Council, it is plain that it was a doctrine which the Council did not approve of; for otherwise why should the Fathers have rejected this article, rather than any of the others which were in the Creed offered to them by Eusebius? From this circumstance the reader will draw his conclusion, that at the Council of Nice the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation was no essential article of the Christian faith; and if it was not, no lapse of years, without a new and special revelation, could establish it to be so in after-times.

Lastly, The doctrine of an Eternal Filiation is in direct contradiction to the doctrine of our Lord's true and proper Divinity; which, if it appeared from nothing else, would be manifest enough from the Arians having made it a constant article in all their Creeds from their very first beginning. And indeed the doctrine was  
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the foundation, the origin, the cause of Arius's error; and if human invention had never produced such a doctrine, Arianism probably never would have been heard of, nor those other heresies which have arisen out of it. I say, if human invention had not produced it; for, by all that I am able to discover, it is no doctrine of Scripture, either direct or by inference. Direct it certainly is not, and by inference it is not, without first presupposing the doctrine; for until the doctrine is presupposed, I know not one single passage from whence it can be inferred. When we infer the doctrine of the Trinity, if it is not directly taught, we are justified in our inference; nor can be charged with presupposing the doctrine first, and then inferring it afterwards. For the Scripture directly teaches us that the Father is Θεός, that the Son is Θεός, and that the Holy Ghost is Θεός, and yet that there is only one Θεός; therefore the inference arises necessarily out of these *Scripture premises*, that the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost, are one God. But where in Scripture are we to look for the premises from whence to infer that a Son was eternally generated in the Divine nature? If any such Scripture there is, it doubtless may be produced; and it would be decisive. But until it is produced, we assuredly may be forgiven if we affirm the doctrine of the Eternal Filiation to be a doctrine

a doctrine of human invention only, and that it never was entitled to that reception which it has met with in the Christian world, as being destitute of that support by which alone doctrines are justified to be Christian doctrines.

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Since the foregoing pages were written, I have been honoured with the Sermon of the learned and very respectable Lord Bishop of Chester, upon the subject of the Eternal Generation; and if it should not have wrought any change of sentiment in me, I flatter myself it will be ascribed neither to perverseness on my part, nor to want of clearness or strength of argument on his Lordship's. The question, I apprehend, is a question of fact, and to be decided by the evidence of fact. Where in the Scriptures, either of the Old or New Testament, is it declared that Jesus Christ was generated, conceived, and born the Son of God, prior to his conception and birth of the Blessed Virgin? That he was conceived and born of the Virgin Mary the Son of God, is a fact, stated and evidenced by St. Luke; but no fact of a prior generation is any where stated or evidenced, at least that I am acquainted with. Surmise and inference

ence indeed have been plentifully resorted to upon the occasion: but I should apprehend inference will not be admitted to decide in a question of fact, at least where the premises from whence it is derived are not fact.

The learned Prelate is of opinion, p. 10, that when our Lord is mentioned in the New Testament as the Son of God, there is almost always implied in it his filial relation to the Father, antecedent to his incarnation. This, his Lordship supposes, is implied in the expression of St. Paul, "He that spared not his own Son, shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" But I own I cannot see how any thing of this kind is implied in it. He that was born of the Virgin was the Son of God, and therefore was, as St. Paul's language is, "God's own Son," without any reference to any prior period. Will it be said by any one, that a Divine Filiation must be by necessity antecedent to all time; that a Son of God could not be, except he was generated from all eternity in the Divine nature? No one, I think, will hazard so daring an assertion. But then of course it follows, that when our Lord is mentioned as the Son of God, there will be no necessity for supposing it to imply his filial relation to the Father antecedent to the incarnation; since it may as truly and as certainly imply his filial relation to the Divinity, in his Divine conception and birth, at his incarnation,

as



as at any antecedent period : and St. Luke and the Gospels justify us in this ; but the other hath nothing to support it but mere conjecture and surmise. That the terms Father and Son, as applied by our Lord, conveyed to the Jews the idea of a natural and essential relation, is freely granted. And was there not a natural and essential relation, when Jesus was born the Son of God of the Virgin Mary ? And was not God then his Father ?

The various passages which the learned Prelate cites from the New Testament, do all of them, as he very justly observes, in their first and obvious import, convey the idea of a natural and essential relation ; but I do not see what consequence follows from hence, since I think it will scarcely be said, that there was no natural and essential relation to the Divinity, when our Lord was born the Son of God at his incarnation. But if there was in that a necessary and essential relation, then these passages are urged without effect, in proof of the doctrine of an Eternal Generation. Was there, or was there not, a filiation, at the birth of our Lord of the Virgin ? Was that, or was it not, a Divine filiation, *a birth* of God's own Son ? If it was, as I apprehend the answer will be, what farther have we to seek ? Then all those passages, which the learned Prelate refers back to an antecedent generation, will apply here, and he will be the only

Son, the beloved Son, the only begotten Son, &c. as positively and certainly as he could be conceived to be by an antecedent generation in the Divine nature.

But his Lordship's opinion is, that many of the texts denote him to have had a filial existence prior to his filiation in the womb of the Virgin. Here I wish that there may not be some mistake, and, as is neither impossible nor improbable, that the existence and the filial existence are not confounded together. That our Lord had a Divine pre-existence prior to his incarnation, is most truly and infallibly the doctrine of Scripture; and that this pre-existence might be, and certainly is, referred to by our Lord himself, as well as by the writers of the New Testament, I think will not be denied. But why must this be a filial pre-existence? His Lordship refers the reader to the 17th chapter of St. John's Gospel; and thither also would I refer the reader. There he will see the actual Son of God addressing his Father, in terms adapted and proper to his state of filiation, and expressive of the existence which he had *with the Father* before the world was, *παρα τῷ Πατρὶ*: but I cannot see any thing expressive of a pre-existent filiation. Our Lord there says, *Δοξασον με συ Πατερ παρα σεαυτῷ τῇ δόξῃ ἣ εἶχον προ τε των κοσμων ειναι παρα σοι*. To express a pre-existent filiation, I apprehend the words should have been

*παρα*

παρὰ σὺ: but as they are, they certainly do not express a derived, but a joint participation in one and the same existence.

The learned Prelate appears to lay much stress upon the words, "Thou lovedst me before the world was;" as if strongly specifying a filial relation antecedent to the incarnation. But it may very well be questioned whether this representation is quite accurate. Since however it may, and certainly does, specify an antecedent existence, it does not specify that existence to have been a filial state. There seems to be something of a fallacy in this matter, and to consist in the interpretation put upon the personal word *me*. Thou lovedst *me*. That our Lord was in a state of filiation when he spake these words, is very certain. But it does not at all appear from them that he was antecedently in such a state; for if that was proved by the words, a great deal more would be proved by them: since as the speaker is the Θεανδρῶτος, if the words, "Thou lovedst *me* before the world was," refer back to an antecedent state of filiation, they will refer back to an antecedent Theanthropic state, if I may be allowed to use such an expression; and then you will prove not only that our Lord was a Son before the incarnation, but likewise that he was God *and man* before the world was; a wildness of opinion in which I think no man will venture to hazard himself.



himself. Therefore they refer only to that Divine state of existence in which he was *παρα τῷ Πατρὶ* before the world was ; and of course they have no reference to an antecedent state of filiation.

The objections which his Lordship derives from the Epistle to the Hebrews, I believe, are all obviated in the preceding pages ; as is also what he urges with regard to the Logos : but p. 19, there is an argument used, which, I own, has surprised me. I very much fear the argument is entirely inverted.

St. John says, by the Logos all things were made ; that he became flesh, and the glory, as of the only-begotten of the Father. Antecedent therefore to his becoming flesh, I apprehend he was not “ the only-begotten of the Father,” but the Logos.

When the Logos became the only-begotten of the Father, then the sacred writers speak of him under that and other similar terms, and ascribe to him under those terms what is proper to him as the Logos. Hence St. Paul, speaking of him as the First-born, ascribes the act of creation to him ; which he does not in respect of his being the First-born, but in respect of the Logos, who became the First-born ; and therefore what St. Paul says, is a confirmation of what St. John says, that it was the Logos who became the only-begotten, and of course the first-born. Let me  
not

not be thought to suggest any thing in the smallest degree disrespectful to the very worthy and learned Prelate. But surely I should practise a fallacy upon myself, if I was to argue from St. Paul's words, that therefore the first-born, as such, was contemporary with the Word and with God.

The argument, as stated p. 18, 19, is, " St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Colossians, says, ' All things were created by him, the First-born.' St. John says, ' All things were made by him, the Word, or Logos.' The First-born, therefore, and the Word, were the same one existence before the foundation of the world." Let me ask here, was the Word, or Logos, the existence of the Divine and human nature united? But it will be allowed, the First-born was; for Jesus Christ, who was the First-born, was the Divine and human nature united; therefore in this respect most certainly the First-born and the Word were not the same one existence before the world was. For the Logos then was unconnected with the human nature, was only *Θεός* and *προς τον Θεον*; but the First-born, or Jesus Christ, is the Logos, connected, united with man's nature. In respect of the Logos, the Word indeed, and the First-born, may be said to be the same existence; but in respect of the First-born, they may not; for if they might, then the phrases First-born, Word, and only-begotten Word, would be strictly

just and proper, which the learned Prelate himself, p. 14, acknowledges they are not; at least he acknowledges as much of the phrase *only-begotten Word*, and of course must be supposed to acknowledge the same of the other phrase, *first-born Word*.

It is impossible not to respect and honour the learned Prelate, for his attachment to the judgment of the Catholic Church, which he expresses in what he says upon the subject of the Nicene Creed. Upon that subject there need not be any dispute. The interpretation of the Creed must and will rest with every man as he is persuaded in his own mind that the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation is, or is not, a doctrine of Scripture.

However, with regard to what his Lordship says concerning the doctrine of the Eternal Generation being in the Creed, even without the article “ begotten of the Father before all worlds,” I must beg leave to think differently. The Creed indeed says of our Lord, that he was “ the Son of God born, the only-begotten of the Father.” But what hath this to do with the doctrine “ begotten of the Father before all worlds?” Born of the Virgin, he was all that the Creed expresses. He was God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father, by whom all things were made. Now that these

terms



terms are expressive of our Lord's Divine nature, is not questioned; but they certainly do not, by any necessity of interpretation, assert his Filiation in the Divine nature, which as certainly the learned Prelate's argument requires that they should.

When it is said, "that from this Creed alone, without the clause in question, we may safely presume that the doctrine of Christ's Eternal Generation was an article in the faith of the earliest Churches," I fear this presumption will not be found to be justified by the fact. The fact is altogether contrary, as I think the reader will find evidenced in the preceding pages. To which I now add, that Irenæus, lib. iii. c. 4. particularly speaking of the faith of the most ancient Churches, specifies in the following terms: *In unum Deum credentes, fabricatorem cæli et terræ, et omnium quæ in eis sunt, per Christum Jesum Dei Filium. Qui propter eminentissimam erga figmentum suam dilectionem eam quæ esset ex Virgine generationem sustinuit ipse per se, hominem adunans Deo, et passus sub Pontio Pilato, &c.* He must have a much keener sight than I have, who can discover in this Creed any traces of the doctrine of Christ's Eternal Generation; and yet Irenæus tells us that this was the faith handed down from the Apostles themselves. He calls it *Veterem Apostolorum traditionem.*

When his Lordship, from a presumption that he has proved the Eternal Generation to be the doctrine of Scripture, urges the following conclusion; "That as the relation of Son in the Godhead implies of necessity derivation and subordination, that derivation and subordination must be consistent with what the Scriptures elsewhere assert of the real and true divinity of the Son," I fear he forgets that this is nothing but the Arian conclusion inverted. His Lordship says, the derivation and subordination of a Son must be interpreted consistently with our Lord's real and true divinity; and the Arian says, that our Lord's divinity must be interpreted so as to consist with his being derived and subordinate; and hence argues for a derived and subordinate divinity.

The concluding paragraph in his Lordship's Sermon I entirely subscribe to: for most assuredly the evil consequences which are therein specified can only be avoided by a strict regard and patient adherence to what is WRITTEN. Upon what is *written* I rest myself altogether for the opinion which I have adopted; and if what is written will not support me in it, I have nothing else to offer in its favour. I have no objection to the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation, from the difficulty of conceiving any idea of it: for the doctrine, whether true or false, will not depend

depend upon the conceived idea of it. It depends with us upon whether it is a written revelation from God or not. If it is, whatever may be the state of our ideas upon the occasion, it is and must be true. Now in the sacred Scriptures I no where see any thing written, except prophetically, concerning a proper Son of God, until the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. I no where read that the Deity was a Father of a Son generated in his own nature. As far therefore as this negative argument extends, I have no authority for affirming that the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation is a true doctrine; for it does not appear to be *written* revelation from God. But this is not all; for what is written manifestly appears to be in opposition to any such doctrine. It is written by St. John, that the glory of the Logos, when he became flesh, was the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father: but if the Eternal Filiation is a true doctrine, then the glory could not have been the glory of the *only-begotten* of the Father, since there must have been a begotten of the Father before this: consequently the glory of the Logos, when he became flesh, was not the glory as of the *only-begotten of the Father*; and yet the *written* revelation by St. John is expressly that it was. So positive a *written* testimony as this requires nothing in addition to strengthen it; and, if it cannot be evaded, as I think it cannot, must be decisive,



cisive, if the matter is to be decided by the evidence of written revelation.

With regard to myself, I have no bias to incline me either to the one side or to the other of this great question. May that which is the truth prevail, and may my thoughts and faith ever be such only as the Scriptures of truth will justify. The learned Bishop, as perhaps he thought that what I advanced might prove prejudicial to the interests of the Catholic Church, hath acted in a manner worthy his high station and character, by opposing me, and by guarding others against the error in which he supposes me to be involved; and he hath been pleased to do this with so much mildness and candour, and in a manner so favourable to my character, that as it reflects honour upon himself, so doth it demand from me my very grateful acknowledgements.

I have only farther to add, that a protracted controversy upon this subject ought on every account to be avoided. The bandying of arguments backwards and forwards serves to very little other purpose but that of displaying the address and abilities of the respective disputants. Let the matter, therefore, in the present instance, be brought to as short an issue as possible. There is decided Scripture proof that Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary the Son of God, and therefore that God was his Father.

Have

Have you any equally decided Scripture proof that he was generated from all eternity the Son of God in the Divine nature ?

There is positive unequivocal Scripture proof that, on account of his mysterious conception and birth by the supervention of the Holy Ghost, and the overshadowing power of the Highest, he was *therefore* to be denominated the Son of God.

Have you any positive unequivocal Scripture proof that he was to be denominated the Son of God, because he was generated from all eternity in the Divine nature, begotten of the Father before all worlds ?

There is positive Scripture proof that the Logos, who existed ever with and in the unity of the Godhead, became flesh, and was born of the Virgin the Son of God, according to the doctrine of St. John and St. Luke.

Have you any as positive Scripture proof that he, who *was already the Son of God* from all eternity, became flesh, and was *born the Son of God of the Virgin* ?

These questions, honestly and ingenuously answered without quibbles or evasions, will leave very little room for any dispute that can be of a long continuance.

Here I thought I had finished ; but while the preceding pages were in the press, the ingenious Mr. Hodson's publication, on the subject of the Eternal Filiation, was transmitted to me. In his Preface, if I rightly understand him, he tells us that the work was composed as a college-exercise for a Fellowship of Brazenose. It doubtless must have gained him great credit with his Society ; and to their suffrage in his favour I beg leave to add mine, as I really think his work replete with ingenuity and cleverness. If it should not involve in it the downfall of Mr. Hawtrey's hypothesis, as is expected, it will nevertheless be no disparagement of Mr. Hodson's powers or industry. He still will be entitled to all the honour arising from having ransacked the ancients, and of having applied their sentiments with a view to the confutation of his antagonist ; which, if the question had been what he apprehends it to be, would most probably have followed. But the question being a question of fact, and to be determined, as such questions usually are, by the evidence of fact ; therefore Mr. Hodson's ingenuity, although confessedly very great, it is to be feared, must prove unsuccessful. The question is not whether it was  
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the opinion of any of the Doctors of the Church, either in ancient or modern times, that the doctrine of the Eternal Generation is a true doctrine, but where is the evidence of the fact upon which their opinion is founded, "that God generated from himself a Son *ab æterno*." That the Son of God was conceived and born of the Virgin, is a fact evidenced by St. Luke. That the *το ἅγιον*, mentioned by St. Luke, had an existence prior to his birth of the Virgin, is evidenced by St. John, who specifies him to have been the *λογος*, and he, the Evangelist says, existed from all eternity, not in a derived state of existence, as that state must have been, if generated, not *παρὰ τὸ Θεόν*, but *ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν*. And that God sent forth his Son not generated from himself *ab æterno*, but *υἱὸν αὐτὸς γενομενον ΕΚ ΓΥΝΑΙΚΟΣ γενομενον ὑΠΟ ΝΟΜΟΝ*, is evidenced by St. Paul, Galat. iv. 4. Here then we have evidence of the facts both of the Filiation and of the Pre-existence. From what Evangelist, Apostle, or inspired Writer, are we to derive any evidence of the fact of a Son eternally generated in the Divine nature? Let the written evidence be produced, and all controversy is at an end. But the production of any such evidence as this makes no part of Mr. Hodson's publication; and such evidence being that only with which the suggestion in my Appeal is concerned, it cannot

cannot be expected that I should enter upon a minute discussion of Mr. Hodson's arguments, which do not apply to my subject.

Mr. Hodson will, perhaps, be surprised at my saying this: however I hope he will soon perceive that I do not say it without very substantial reason: for throughout the whole of his performance there prevails one general mistake, arising from his not properly separating his ideas; and, as I do not imagine he is sensible of this himself, if he will give me leave, I will point out to him wherein his mistake lies. It lies, as I have said, in not separating his ideas, and in confounding and jumbling together title and character with nature and existence. The identity of the Son's Divine existence and nature, with the existence and Divine nature of the Word, Mr. Hawtrey acknowledges in the most unreserved manner; because the Scripture declares, that as all things were made by the Word, so also that all things were made by the Son. The former is the doctrine of St. John; the latter of St. Paul. "Either therefore," to use Mr. Hodson's own words, p. 15, "one of them is wrong—or, if they are both right, the Word and the Son mean one and the same pre-existing power." So also, p. 16, he says, "we are reduced to the dilemma either of branding the Evangelist or the Apostle with the guilt of falsehood,

falsehood, or of acknowledging the eternal identity of the Word and Son." To the latter alternative Mr. Hawtrey most readily and *ex animo* subscribes; for the Divine existence of the Word and the Son is most certainly one and the same. But this is not sufficient for Mr. Hodson, who thinks that these, and similar passages, not only prove that the Divine Being of the Son is the same with the Divine Being of the Word, but contends that they prove the eternity of the Son's Filiation. For as St. Paul gives the title of Son to our Lord in the act of creation, therefore the Filiation was prior to the Incarnation; and as the act of creation was *ab æterno*, so also was the Filiation. This is the burthen and substance of Mr. Hodson's argument and book.

Here then, in order to enable him to unravel the fallacy concealed under this argument, I would recommend it to him to consider that the action is performed by the person, and not by the title or character; and that when an action is said to be performed by a person, distinguishing him by any particular title or character, it is no proof that he had that title or character when he performed the action. He might or he might not have had it, as the case may be. For when we speak of and describe a person, we always describe him under the character which he has, and not under that which he has laid aside, and  
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has not ; and under that character, because it is the character which he has, we ascribe to him that action which he performed when he had not that character. To exemplify this ; the Word, by whom all things were created, condescended to become incarnate, to be born as human beings are born ; and he became the Son of God. Here then was a character in terms indisputably different from that of the Word ; but as the personality, the being of the Word was not destroyed by this assumption of a different character, therefore the act of creation is still given to him under the character of Son, although it was performed by him as the Word. And this is no *subterfuge*, as Mr. Hodson would suggest (p. 18.) ; is not describing our Lord as acting in the character of *vios*, at a period before he had assumed that character. But therefore the Word is said, under the title and character of *Son*, to have made the worlds ; because at the time when it was said of him, he had that title and character. Let this be exemplified by familiar instances. Because Dr. Lowth became a Bishop, we therefore say that *Bishop Lowth* wrote the Poetical Prelections. For a similar reason we say *Bishop Warburton* wrote the Divine Legation ; and yet neither of them had the character of Bishop when the works were written. In like manner Dr. Blackstone, when he was  
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Vinerian Professor, wrote his Commentaries. He then had neither the title nor character which he had afterwards; and yet, when we say Sir William Blackstone was the author of the Commentaries, or Judge Blackstone, no one ever argues from thence, that the author of the Commentaries must have been a Baronet, or a Judge, when they were written: nor was the language ever thought to be improper, or to be a describing the Vinerian Professor as acting under the title or character of Baronet or Judge before he had either. If a person has a new title or character, you must speak of him under that title or character, otherwise it will be thought you are not speaking of him, but of some one else; and whatever actions he may have performed, you naturally ascribe them to him under that title or character, because thereby the person by whom the action was performed is distinguished. To apply this.

The Divine existence of the Word, and the Divine existence of the Son, is undoubtedly one and the same existence; as is sufficiently proved by the Gospel.

The title and character of the Son as undoubtedly is different from the title or character of the Word. But the Divine personal existence of the Word and of the Son being one and the same, therefore any and every action of the

Word will be truly and properly ascribed to him under his title of Son ; which will be no more a proof of a Filiation *ab æterno*, than it is a proof that Sir William Blackstone was a Baronet when he wrote the Commentaries, because, when speaking of him under that title, we say Sir William wrote the Commentaries. I know not how to make this matter plainer ; and if the advocates for the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation would reason as this instance shews they ought to reason, they would then perceive plainly that what they have imagined to be proof is absolutely no proof at all, and that the doctrine of an Eternal Filiation rests entirely on the arbitrary surmise of the assertor of it.

Warm with the glow of youth, and eager after victory, Mr. Hodson scruples not to have recourse to those practices, to which artful combatants are accustomed ; who themselves invent what may be objected to, and then lay it to the charge of their adversary.

Mr. Hawtrey does not know that he ever imputed to those who maintain the Eternal Generation, as the Catholic Christians have done as well as the Arians, an affection for Arianism ; and he is perfectly conscious that he never intended any such thing : but Mr. Hodson, p. 68, charges him with it ; retaliates heterodoxy on him, and then, with the unguarded illiberality



of a young man, involves him in the heresy of Servetus and Paul of Samosata.

Again, p. 73, he tells his reader that Mr. Hawtrey has an affection for the Arian subterfuge, and refers to Θεανδρωπος, p. 13: but what he means by this reference I am unable to guess; for I cannot see any thing of the kind there.

Again, p. 24, he signifies that "Mr. Hawtrey's conjecture will shew that heresy hath contaminated the Catholic faith for seventeen centuries." But Mr. Hawtrey never suggested this, nor any thing of the kind, by any thing that he hath written.

But a most dreadful charge still remains to be mentioned, in p. 32. There Mr. Hodson charges me with a blasphemy, which makes me shudder, even at the thought of it. He tells his reader, that it is my doctrine, that our Lord Jesus Christ, "the beloved Son of God, over whom we are told death hath no more dominion, should cease to exist at a time when the graves have given up their dead, and that he himself should be doomed to annihilation, at the very moment when those whom he has ransomed are bid to enter into the joy of their Lord." All this most abhorred blasphemy, it seems, he has discovered in p. 38 of Θεανδρωπος, where Mr. Hawtrey says, "Then shall the dispensation of the Θεανδρωπος be terminated, and the union of the λογος with

man's nature, cease ;" words which lead to nothing of the kind.

Mr. Hodson is certainly a very ingenious young man, and may be said to have a great deal of what is clever about him ; but, nevertheless, the inexperience of youth makes him fall into some very awkward mistakes. Here he makes *cease* signify *cease to exist*, which it by no necessity signifies, and which it is impossible it can signify in this place : because, in connection with *cease*, it is added, " then shall the *Son himself* be subject." Was a state of non-existence, of annihilation, to become subject ? This would be as impossible, as I humbly think it is impossible that Mr. Hodson should not have seen the words " then shall *the Son himself* be subject." But if he did see them, his ideas must have been uncommonly deranged, when he charged such atrociously wicked, such abominable blasphemy to the account of Mr. Hawtrey. But I make very large allowances for his youth ; and, notwithstanding these mistakes, I am persuaded that he is a very well-intentioned young man, and that, when years and experience shall have mellowed his judgment, he will be fairly entitled to an honourable niche in the temple of theological controversialists.

I shall detain the reader only with a few words more relative to Mr. Hodson's interpretation of  
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the word *πρωτοτοκος*; involved in which he apprehends he perceives the downfall of Mr. Hawtrey's hypothesis.

*Πρωτοτοκος* does not signify *born before*; nor, by any rule of construction, may it be so interpreted. It is very improperly rendered in Latin *primogenitus*; such not being the signification of the word.

The word is compounded of *πρωτος* and *τοκος* *partus*, and is referred not to the child, as the first of other children, for there may be a *πρωτοτοκος* without others subsequent, but to the mother of the child. Thus it signifies, Matt. i. 25. "until she had brought forth her son;" *τον πρωτοτοκον*, her first birth, or, as we should say, her first child; first with respect to her, in that she never had brought forth any before. Such also is its signification, Luke ii. 6. *και ετεκε τον υιον αυτης τον πρωτοτοκον*. Having thus obtained the certain signification of the word in its first use and application, we may the more easily ascertain its signification when used upon other occasions. Thus in *πρωτοτοκος πασης κτισεως*, the signification will be either "the first birth that ever the whole creation brought forth," whereby *πασα κτισις* will be made the parent, and which I suppose no one will contend for; or else it must signify "a birth superior, pre-eminent above the whole creation." Could there be any doubt with



with respect to this interpretation of the passage, it would be effectually removed by taking the whole of the passage in connection together, from the 15th verse (Coloss. i.) to the end of the 18th: for thereby it appears, that what the Apostle is establishing is not the priority of our Lord's birth, but his superior excellence and pre-eminence above all things; for in the close of it he says, *ἵνα γενηται ἐν πᾶσιν πρῶτεων*; therefore all the preceding part was relative to his pre-eminence. He was the *Εἰκὼν Θεοῦ τὴν ἀοράτην*, therefore *πρῶτεων*; he was *πρωτοτοκος πάσης κτίσεως*, therefore *πρῶτεων*; he was Creator of all things, of every description, therefore *πρῶτεων*; he was before all things; he was the Head of the Church; and finally, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence, he was *αρχὴ πρωτοτοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν*. More than this I think I need not urge; and when Mr. Hodson hath well weighed and considered this matter, I should imagine he will become less sanguine upon the subject, than he appears to be from his present publication.

F I N I S.

## E R R A T A.

P. 19. l. 23. for &c. read and. P. 26. l. 2. for καὶ read καί. P. 27. l. 4. after Smyrenians, for his read Ignatius's. P. 44. l. 11. read Polytheists.